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ADDRESSES

TO

YOUNG CHILDREN,

ORIGINALLY DELIVERED

IN

The Girls' Free School, Bell Lane.



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PREFACE.

SOME years ago, one of our ministers, distinguished for his great abilities, his ardent zeal, and earnest devotion to the cause of education, expressed a wish, that easy lessons in the form of discourses might be prepared for the use of the little children in Bell Lane, not to supersede the religious instruction given in the School, but to recall to the minds of the youthful learners some of the beautiful texts of the Bible and their sublime teaching. The reverend gentleman was of opinion, that neither the published sermons of English divines, nor those of continental preachers, however eloquent and admirable, were suited to the capacity of young children, and he believed that those personally and most intimately acquainted with the wants of the poor, with their virtues and their failings, were the best qualified to supply the deficiency which he had pointed out.

Under such circumstances, neither diffidence nor inexperience could be pleaded as an adequate reason for declining to make, at least, zealous efforts towards the fulfilment of the minister's wishes. So it was, that during two years a simple address was every week written, and read in the Girls' School-room, in Bell Lane. Several kind friends having expressed a desire to see these discourses in print, twenty-eight have accordingly been selected, not indeed for publication, but for distribution among the poor.

It is, perhaps, requisite to add, that while in these weekly exhortations the young pupils were constantly admonished to reverence and obey those heavenly commandments which so beautifully inculcate the practice of the highest virtues, and the humble performance of the best deeds of love—sin, vice, crime, and the temptations which so frequently lead to guilt, were scarcely glanced at. It was deemed both an easier and a more pleasing task, to fill young minds with bright pictures of goodness and of happiness, and to make young hearts glow with admiration for unflinching self-sacrifice, for gentle charity and

tender mercy, than to appal the imagination of children by shadowing forth, for their instruction and warning, those gloomy realities of degradation still unknown to them, and from which, under God's blessing, and by faithful adherence to the precepts of the sacred Volume, they may always be mercifully kept aloof.

It would be impossible to let the following pages appear, without sincerely acknowledging the obligations of the writer to the learned Dr. Kalisch, whose great work has been frequently consulted, and whose kind advice has been unweariedly given, and gratefully accepted, as the best assistance and encouragement.

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I.

THE DUTY OF FORGIVENESS.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS.

THROUGHOUT the earth, which God, in His inexhaustible goodness, has made so radiant and so beautiful for the enjoyment of His children, and for the sustenance and benefit of the innumerable animated beings called into existence by His heavenly power, you will find one admirable law of love, sacred and universal, pervading every land and clime, every hour and season — one law of tenderness and solicitude, of care and mercy, divinely framed to rule the destinies of all the living. You cannot watch the myriads of insects, that play and dance in the sunbeam, or drink nectar from the cups of fragrant flowers — nor the countless tribes that gleam in lake and stream, and inhabit the crystal chambers of the ocean — nor the birds, that sing their songs of gladness in woods and gardens, or suspend on the branches of high trees the nests of their

young, to be rocked by the breeze, and shaded by the trellised roof of sheltering leaves; you cannot contemplate the living wonders of earth, sea, and air, without feeling that it is the loving-kindness of the Lord, which guards and protects them all.

And if the beneficence of the Almighty amply supplies every winged creature that flies, from the condors and eagles on giant mountains to the crimson-breasted robin, which, in the cold winter season, receives its nourishment on the steps of our own door—from the wild tenants of the jungle near the burning equator, to the rein-deer which feeds on the mosses beneath the eternal snows of the polar fields; if His paternal care has made provision alike for the colossal whale, and for the diminutive coral insect which constructs whole cities under the foaming waves: how much more has not His bounty done for man? Has not His divine hand vouchsafed to us energies, gifts, and blessings immensely superior to the advantages possessed by all other beings, and has not the Lord in forming us in His own image imposed upon us the fulfilment of great duties? Has He not commanded that we shall obey those sacred and immutable laws of infinite kindness? Has He not appointed us His ministers on earth, and are we not to love our fellow-men as He, the omnipotent Ruler of the universe, loves all His creatures? My

dear children, the Holy Bible repeatedly enforces precepts of ardent zeal and devotion; yet in our thoughtlessness we often fail to understand their meaning, or to carry them into practice, and, therefore, we cannot be too frequently reminded of those great and unchangeable rules of conduct. Indeed many among us are not always able to appreciate their importance, nor to comprehend their all-embracing character.

When we read in the book of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," we enter thoroughly into the spirit of the text, and are fully inclined to be gentle, charitable, and generous in our intercourse with those who have ever met us with words of good-will and of sympathy. Obedience to the heavenly command appears easy, and we experience a degree of satisfaction, at times even a thrill of rapture, in being able to aid and to benefit those whom Providence has placed near us, and who excite feelings of tender solicitude in our breast.

But we too seldom remember, that we are no less bound to be kind to those who have been unkind to us. For good actions do not in reality deserve the high praise so often lavished upon them, when accomplished without an effort or a struggle, in easy compliance with the dictates of a happy disposition, which finds its greatest delight and reward in the exercise of friendly sentiments.

Yet it is certainly most difficult to help and to serve those who hate us, and we should not forget, that this is one of the great duties of life, enjoined by the following words of Scripture: "If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink" (Prov. xxv. 21). My dear children, just as throughout the external world there are innumerable affinities and resemblances, and also endless differences, so in the internal world of the heart and mind there are countless varieties of thought and feeling; and, although there is but one broad path of virtue, there are hundreds, nay thousands of roads that lead to error.

Not all among us sin in the same manner, nor from the same causes. The diversities of human organisation are numberless. Every one should, therefore, sound the very depths of his nature, in order to know all his faults, wrestle with them in the hour of danger, and overpower these dangerous foes, though he may be unable to annihilate them completely, which is, alas! an almost hopeless task.

It is only by hatred that our friends, or the neighbours whom the divine law commands us to love, can be transformed into enemies: it is either by the hatred, which they are supposed to entertain towards us, or through the same bitter feeling fostered by ourselves against them. Now let us

examine conscientiously what can give rise to such sad, peace-destroying sentiments; and we shall find, that they are chiefly engendered by misapprehensions. Gallings words may be overheard by us, or may otherwise come to our knowledge; perhaps they have been addressed to us personally; we misunderstand, miscontrue; and resent them; or there are acts which we consider injuries: yet, both words and deeds, expressions that fall hastily or angrily from lips quivering with excitement, and actions not meant to hurt or wound, and even if reprehensible in themselves, not the brood of spite or baseness of heart, but the mere result of narrowness of mind, or of the frailty inherent in human nature—yes, both hard language and hard dealing should not be held sufficient to change the friend of to-day into the enemy of to-morrow. Do we not on thousands of occasions labour under false impressions? May not our senses delude us, our eyes and ears deceive us? Are we never misinformed, never misled by the vehemence of our feelings, or by the ardour of our sympathies prevented from judging calmly and dispassionately? May not our sight be obscured, our views of men and their character be distorted by prejudices, or may we not be carried away by the unreasoning violence of our first impulses? Let us, therefore, pause ere we believe ourselves surrounded by evil-thinkers and evil-doers; ere we allow the work-

ings of the mind or the emotions of the heart to make one single individual appear our enemy.

The sudden ebullition or the silent growth of hatred may be attributed to various causes. Some of us in our daily intercourse give way to hastiness, which soon swells into passion, or degenerates into anger, and thus we see our love and kindliness consumed as if by a conflagration, and find instead of blissful, life-sustaining sentiments nothing but the ruin and ashes of distrust. It is true, that the flames might easily have been extinguished; and that later, as when we mournfully consider the fearful destruction of a beautiful edifice, we speedily discover how the calamity might have been mitigated, if not averted. It is then that we feel regret, and more than regret; shame, when left alone with our own avenging thoughts; humiliation, when brought into contact with the world; and, above all, remorse at having by our own folly endangered, nay lost, some of the most valuable possessions on earth.

Many permit irritation to be developed into animosity. They are annoyed at real or imaginary insults or injuries, on which their mind continually dwells, until those painful subjects assume gigantic proportions, and the heart that harbours them becomes full of bitterness and rancour. Thus, hatred may be produced by undue warmth of feeling, or by intense tenacity of thought. But in truth,

those innate varieties of character, those inborn faults which so frequently lead us into error and sin, are no excuse for wrong-doing; since, for good and great purposes, they have been allowed to form part of our nature, and should be made instrumental in guiding us to the exercise of high virtues. Thus, my dear children, if impetuosity of feeling is apt to make us hasty and passionate, it ought to furnish equal or counterbalancing powers for the attainment of moral excellence. The same fervid organisation, the same quick emotions, which, at the slightest provocation, hurry us into violent explosions of uncontrollable anger, cannot become congealed into apathy or hardened into callousness, when we survey our own failings—but should, on the contrary, after unseemly outbursts of excitement, cause us to deplore most truly the magnitude and whole extent of our faults, and kindle in us the anxious desire of atoning for the past, not merely by deeds of kindness, but by strenuously opposing the rising waves of passion in future.

That ardour of disposition should also enable us to sympathise more readily with our brethren, to make allowances for all faults kindred to our own, and for the offences which may result from them.

The cankering irritation which deepens into

hatred and is produced by retrospection too intense, by incessant brooding over past events or words, may also be conquered by the very propensity which leads to it, as, in a similar way, homœopathists vanquish disease by the poison which caused it.

The same unwavering earnestness of thought is energetic in us for noble aims, and should induce us to consider the sinfulness of allowing the recollection of old grievances to rankle, until it completely vitiates our feelings, and turns the milk of kindness into the venom of hatred. The same powers of concentration, if employed to ascertain how a wall of inimical separation may have risen between our neighbours and ourselves, will soon demolish the most rugged stronghold of prejudice, especially when we are supported by the remembrance that our holy Law enjoins us to forget and to forgive.

Yet we may often fail to convince ourselves that there is no reason for resentment; we may, on the contrary, fancy or know that we indeed have enemies, some of whom offended and injured us in the past, while others are believed to be still plotting and sinning against us. The real or imaginary destroyers of our peace, then, my dear children, are those whom we suppose to have deprived us of some advantage, curtailed our enjoyments, lessened our merits in the opinion of our

friends or of the world, those whom we inwardly accuse of having slandered us, of having dealt falsely and treacherously against us. And still our text says, "If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink." These words have, in truth, a most comprehensive meaning, and admit of the widest application. For it is quite certain, that the basest conduct on the part of a foe, would not justify us in withholding from him bread to appease his hunger, or water to quench his thirst. Nor is it often that our enemies would actually require such gifts at our hands. In our temperate zone, and owing to the progress of science, the earth yields almost everywhere her refreshing streams to rich and poor. And bread, though less easily obtained, would scarcely be refused to any one who craved it, impelled by necessity. The words of our text, which live on in eternal beauty and power, should be understood in a far less restricted sense. In their impressive simplicity, they show most emphatically, that it is one of the sacred duties of life to supply the wants of even our enemies. Bread and water, representing, as they certainly do, the chief needs of man, are typical of all others.

The word enemy has a harsh, repelling sound; but the reality is much less alarming and dangerous than the picture reflected and magnified in the

mirror of the mind's eye. Indeed, evil-disposed strangers, or our bitterest enemies, can never inflict such deep injuries upon us, as we may heap upon ourselves. It has, by an all-wise Providence, been so ordained and decreed that our own follies, vices, and sins, shall be scourges unto us, that they shall torture our minds with remorse, until, from the gloomy abyss of wretchedness, we look up wistfully towards the spheres of peace and virtue, and turn in future from guilty paths. May we, therefore, be anxiously and severely watchful over ourselves, but with regard to suspicion against others, always keep in faithful remembrance the beautiful words of the prophet Zechariah: "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart." And there can be no doubt, that the thoughts and visions of ill-will and malice, by which we are often haunted, can with perfect truth be called the dark and ill-starred offspring of our own imagination, shaped by ourselves in all their frightful ugliness.

We may certainly have given or received offence unwittingly; uncontrollable circumstances have perhaps estranged us completely from our neighbours: but shall undying anger exaggerate the injuries from which we have suffered? shall the cut under which we may still be smarting be widened into a deep, never-healing wound? Shall we doom ourselves to perpetual unhappiness, and let constant

hostility usurp the place which belongs to the gentler feelings of the heart? Assuredly not; for the divine Law commands us to extirpate wrath and rancour. Recollect, my dear children, that love is always intent upon good deeds, and acts of kindness, and pardon. But alas! many of us know only the love of self, a love so deep, so powerful, that whatever our errors and transgressions may be, we are easily induced to forgive and forget them, without remembering that less indulgence to ourselves, and more of that charitable feeling evinced towards others, would restore a useful equilibrium, and make us happier and better in every relation of life. It is sad to mark, how faintly we condemn our own errors, and how soon we feel irate at those of others. Though we read the Bible, we become oblivious of its precepts, and do not keep in mind that "the discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and that it is his glory to pass over a fault." Such discretion, if always exercised, would lessen the amount of evil in the world, and, by crushing hatred in the bud, prevent its expansion into the upas-tree of lasting enmity. My dear children, in order to understand the sentiments of our fellow-beings, and not to be unjust in our judgment of their failings, but to overlook their offences against us readily, to obliterate the recollection of them entirely, we must banish pride from our thoughts, so that our hearts may not be lifted up above our

brethren, and that keeping in vivid remembrance our own weakness, our own errors and trespasses, we may never be tempted to refuse bread and water to our enemies, but, in all gentleness and humility, pardon others as we hope and pray to be pardoned by Almighty God.

II.

ON PRIDE.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

WE cannot be proud either in heart or mind, in thought or feeling, in deed or word or even in look, we cannot assume haughtiness of gait, nor, on the other hand, feel depressed or humiliated by lowliness of station, if we remember, that the Almighty is the Dispenser of all advantages and privileges, that we owe them not to any merit, not to any power, of our own, but to His goodness and beneficence; if we recollect, that before the throne of glory, of justice, and of mercy, all men, the poorest as well as the greatest and mightiest of the earth, are equal, all alike small, though all lovingly cared for and protected; and that, for some wise purpose, hidden from our limited view, the divine will of the Almighty has placed us in the condition which we occupy, however humble and subordinate, or however high and exalted it may be.

My dear children, we will arm ourselves against pride and presumption in times of smiling prosperity, and against despondency and hopelessness

in seasons of gloom and adversity, by recalling the words of the prophet Samuel's pious mother, namely, "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich : He bringeth low, and lifteth up" (1 Sam. ii. 7). It seems impossible for us ever to despise the needy, to think less of them than of ourselves, or of those whose place in the world is more prominent, whose portion appears better, whose prospects or actual enjoyments are more brilliant, when we recollect, that it is God who maketh poor ; while pomp and eminence of station, indigence and lowliness, are only the external distinctions, the fluctuating advantages or disadvantages of men ; that they have no more real value than the garments they wear, than the dwellings they inhabit, which are subject to innumerable changes and alterations, and even to entire destruction : whereas the greatest treasures mercifully bestowed upon us by Almighty God, and on which our happiness in this world and in the next depends, are imperishable, and equally divided among all His children.

Life, and health, and strength—the senses, those gates of knowledge, through which we enter into communion with the outward world—are shared by rich and poor. The heart, which enables us to feel with and for others ; the heart, with its sufferings and joys, its love and devotion ; and the soul, with its bright-winged

hopes, its high-soaring aspirations, its radiant faith, are given alike to all. And surely, neither rags and tatters, nor splendour and the jewels of vanity, should form a barrier between beings, who possess in common, not merely the best gifts and pleasures, which this world can afford, but also those blessings, which are not left behind on this side of the tomb, but remain the portion and inheritance of man through eternity.

Our duties towards the poor are the same as towards the rich ; for are we not told, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?” The wealthy, however, those who are basking in the sunshine of affluence, seldom want our good offices ; they do not often require our help or our exertions, whereas our less prosperous neighbours stand constantly in need of our most cordial assistance. Do not misunderstand me, my dear children ; I do not mean that even these always and exclusively demand tangible gifts at our hands ; they crave our support, lest the pressure of their necessities should discourage them ; our aid, to strengthen them for a persevering struggle with the difficulties of life ; our sympathy, to lighten their burden, to prove to them, that outward circumstances can make no difference in their real worth as human beings, in their claims upon our love as brothers. We are in duty bound to secure for them what they may not be able to obtain for themselves, and prominently among

the best gifts of this world, the advantages of education for their children. We must try to rouse their powers of independence and of self-reliance, to afford them the possibility of making successful exertions, and of earning their bread by the work of the mind or of the hands, by that zealous labour, which is the salt of true enjoyment. We must prove to the poor, that the artificial distinctions caused by the possession of a few hard pieces of silver or gold, have, in reality, nothing in common with our happiness. Clear water quenches thirst as effectually, and refreshes the parched lips as completely, as the creaming ale of the tankard, or the sparkling juice of the grape, which flows in bright crystal goblet. The choicest viands, the rarest delicacies, the greatest luxuries, do not nourish us more than bread and meat. Velvet garments, spun and woven from the shining threads of the silk-cocoon, gorgeous shawls, the rich productions of the Indian loom, sable and ermine, those costly furs brought from the lands of snow and ice, do not protect our limbs better against wind, and rain, and cold, than the plainest clothes furnished by the fibres of the cotton plant, the wool of sheep, the fleece of lambs. Proud columns do not more safely support the roof that shelters our weariness, than rude wooden beams and rafters. But order and cleanliness, comfort and cheerfulness change the humblest home into a

palace, where bronzes and marbles will never be missed.

If born in poverty, let us learn to adorn our condition with all the virtues which belong to the most prosperous, because to the least tempted of our brethren; let us endeavour to surround ourselves with the best enjoyments, with those which may be shared alike by all mankind, and are wholly independent of grandeur and glitter. Let us not harbour feelings of envy against the rich: for envy is a cankering worm, that will undermine not merely our happiness, but also eat away our good and noble qualities.

Let us be satisfied with our portion, thankful to the Lord for the blessings He has graciously vouchsafed to us; and may we prize them so deeply and so truly, as never to long for the possession of other gifts, nor to undervalue our own treasures, nor to attach undue importance to the high estate of others. It is a weakness to be dazzled by the magnificence that may encompass our neighbours. They are but human like ourselves, and the shining halo which surrounds them, and so often attracts the eager looks of curiosity, may hide from our view not only cares and anxieties, but also faults and blemishes, from which poverty and lowliness of station have perhaps guarded us. For there is much more equality in the world than many of us think. Penury

and wealth have their respective perils, they have failings incidental to their trials, and to the demands made upon them, or to the duties they are expected to undertake ; and as all men are equal in the eyes of God, so should they be in our estimation. And I think that, while trying, in our appreciation of those around us, to remain entirely uninfluenced by their outward circumstances, we should strive by the powers and energies beneficently bestowed upon us by Almighty God, to fulfil our obligations of brotherly love and devotion to those who come within our circle, and within the sphere of our labours and of our usefulness. As poverty is no shame and no disgrace, as it may be and frequently is ennobled by the exercise of the best and highest qualities, so wealth, of itself, confers no honour and no dignity. It may be defaced and degraded by faults and failings ; while, in many instances, it is not only the result and reward of indefatigable activity, of untiring diligence, of nobly directed energy, but also the source of well-being to many, the spring whence flow great advantages, and real benefits to numberless human beings. If our lot be cast among the wealthy of the land, if we should have been cradled in the lap of luxury, or have become prosperous by our own exertions and by the grace of Providence, do not let us forget, not even during a single moment, the tasks which the possession of any advantages

imposes upon their owners. May we ever think of those in adversity, remembering, that it is the Lord who raiseth up and casteth down.

Let us consider, how much lies in our power, and recollect that wealth is not sufficient to make us happy, that it can do little or nothing for our own felicity, but that it allows us to promote the welfare and advancement of others. And, believe me, the consciousness of having accomplished our work well and zealously, lent a helping hand to all good and useful efforts, assisted in comforting the needy and the suffering, in eradicating evil, in dispelling ignorance, in diffusing knowledge—that blessed consciousness will give us a thrilling sensation of happiness which all the gold in the world cannot enable us to purchase; or, if we should be bowed down by pain or sorrow—for you know, my dear children, that it is impossible to pass many years on earth, and always to keep affliction from our door—even then, the conviction of having done our duty will uphold us in the hour of trial, and console us in the time of bereavement. In poverty let us recollect, that God raiseth up and that, as the Preacher truly says, “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy faith is limited,” whereas our faith, my dear children, should be boundless, like the beneficence of the Lord. In prosperity, let us remember, that the same divine hand of the Al-

mighty Creator bringeth low ; that on earth all is unstable and fleeting ; that worldly possessions, however firmly clenched by man, may vanish on any day of his life ; that even if he should take them to the brink of the grave, he can not carry them beyond its impenetrable mystery ; and that they are nothing without the greater treasures, which form the property of all God's children, and can be neither bought nor sold.

My dear young friends, if you keep the words of our text faithfully in mind, if you recollect, "that the Lord bringeth low and raiseth up," you will never, while in prosperity, harbour undue pride ; you will never despise the lowly in your heart, nor treat them contemptuously ; for you will feel that at any moment the Almighty may cast you down ; nor can you in adversity allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by the misery of despondency, by the gloom of hopelessness, by the affliction of despair ; for you will remember, that God raiseth up, yea, from the darkest depths of anguish, not merely to the heights of earthly happiness, but to the ineffable and endless joys and glories of heavenly holiness and immortality.

III.

“THE LORD IS NIGH UNTO ALL THAT
CALL UPON HIM.”

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

WE never rise at early morn, after the refreshing slumbers of the night, without thanking Almighty God for having graciously relieved our weariness by the blessing of renewed strength, thereby mercifully enabling us to perform the labours of the day, and permitting us to enjoy its pleasures with increased buoyancy. Nor do we lie down to seek repose, after the exertions and fatigues of our calling, without breathing words of gratitude to the Lord for having preserved us from harm in the busy turmoil of our duties, or having allowed the even flow of gently-passing hours to remain undisturbed. Without His constant protection we could not exist.

My dear children, though young and inexperienced, you know, that to God, our heavenly Creator, we must look for life, and health, and sustenance; yet, let me hope to make you more fully acquainted with the unceasing care of Providence, by endeavouring to explain to you the signification of the following words of the Psalmist: “The

Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, unto all that call upon Him in truth" (Ps. cxlv.18).

We may always invoke His beneficence, and be sure that He will hear us. But, although we repeat our prayers in the morning and in the evening, although many of us utter thanksgivings more frequently still, and never taste bread, nor partake of any refreshment, without pronouncing a blessing, these words are often mechanically said; and in times of trouble and distress, we far more generally call upon our neighbour for assistance than upon our God. I would warn you, my dear children, against the habit of relying for help upon others, however benevolent you may believe or know them to be; and the faith in human excellence is certainly one of the greatest sources of happiness. Assurances of support may have been given to you by eager and zealous friends; and so long as they act only as an encouragement to untiring perseverance, to well-directed exertions, they cannot be too highly appreciated. But take care, my dear children, lest they should make you overrate the power of those who have promised to serve you, and undervalue your own resources, which, as God has decreed in His wisdom, must always be able to accomplish more for you than the combined efforts of others can possibly achieve for your success and prosperity. This conviction will, I think, double your energy,

increase your zeal and your firmness of purpose. It will not mislead you into conceit or egotism, but, on the contrary, make you deeply sensible of your duties; and while you labour cheerfully, not alone for your individual advantage, but also for the benefit and enjoyment of those around you, it will cause you considerably to abstain from pressing your own wants and cares upon others, from obtruding upon them your real or imaginary necessities, from taking up their time, which is wealth and life, with the recital of your wishes and cravings, from distressing them by the tale of your woes, from harassing them with requests and demands, which it may be out of their power to satisfy.

And believe me, my dear children, even in a worldly point of view, you will lose little by not seeking relief from those who may appear able and willing to give it. The benevolent, who are really disposed to serve their fellow-beings, do not wait to be asked. They will feel greater satisfaction in assisting the sufferers, whose self-reliance, whose earnest efforts for their own maintenance and advancement, point them out as truly worthy of encouragement, and of that aid which is never withheld from genuine merit.

My dear children, we will not take a gloomy view of human nature, nor dwell upon the faithlessness of those who, having pledged themselves

to render good service in time of need, break their word; nor will we reflect upon the apathy which allows the once glowing heart to become cold, the ear to grow deaf, which hearkened to every wail, and the once pitying eye to turn away, when to look and to see would be to feel and to give; we will not speak of the callousness of those, whose lips are locked by freezing indifference, when, with a few gentle words, they might drop balm on bleeding wounds. It can never be advisable to meditate on the faults and short-comings of others, except to make us indefatigable in eradicating our own. But it may be useful to consider the infirmities of human purpose, and the vicissitudes of human life. I am, therefore, anxious you should understand, that it is not desirable to rely upon others, or to put our confidence in those, whose influence and power in the world, whose innate goodness of disposition, seem to indicate, that they may be safely trusted, that at all times we shall find them pillars of strength to uphold us, protectors to shield us from harm, or patrons to lift us into high places, generous friends to relieve our wants, or to lavish upon us even more than the tangible gifts of fortune, by brightening our existence with the priceless treasures of love and devotion.

There are surely many kind hearts, my dear children, throbbing with the warmest sympathy

for every woe, and feeling deeply interested in the welfare of their brethren; many noble minds, animated by an ardent desire to serve and benefit others, and who may, with the blessing of God, be able to carry out their enthusiastic aims for the progress and prosperity of mankind. Yet I most earnestly advise you not to rely upon those generous friends: they may be truthful and zealous; but their powers are not inexhaustible; their time, their influence, and their means, are alike limited. They may have more pressing calls to respond to at the moment when you feel impelled to crave their assistance. They have probably aged parents, whose infirmities require their constant devotion; brothers and sisters in want, and claiming all their energies to lead them through the labyrinths of the world. Or your friends, being blessed with children, may, when you demand their attention, be overwhelmed with domestic cares and harrowing anxieties. In some instances, the husband is perhaps involved in embarrassments, and the wife, upon whose active solicitude you have ever relied, can give you but a sigh and a tear, for her duties are elsewhere. Or the wife herself may be laid low by disease, and then, amidst daily labours, torturing apprehensions, and vigils by the bed of the sufferer, her companion can find no time, can seize no leisure moment, to stretch out a helping hand to

you. Or the patron, who was prosperous and powerful, may suddenly become poor and powerless; he who was healthy and robust, may fall ill, and wax faint and feeble. And then you stand alone in life, forlorn, helpless beings; for you have relied upon the strength, the wealth, the benevolence of your neighbour, and not upon yourselves, and not upon your God, forgetting, that "the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, unto all that call upon Him in truth." Yes, He is near unto you at all times and in all places; He sees you at dead of night, when all fires have ceased to glow, when all lights have ceased to burn on earth, when only heaven's luminaries shine above. Even when their brilliancy is veiled by dark clouds, He sees you, and neither walls nor roofs, neither oceans nor mountains, can separate Him from those whom His divine will has created. He sees and hears you at early morn, when human eyes are yet closed, when human limbs are sleep-bound, and human lips sleep-locked. He is near unto you in childhood, guiding your steps, and by His beneficence rendering harmless a thousand falls. He is near you in later years, giving you health and vigour to labour and to persevere. He is near the old and the young, near the rich and the poor, in humble hamlets and in proud cities, in cottages and in palaces, in the sable depths of the mine, in the mazes of sombre forests, on the wide and furious

seas, amid the icebergs of the north, or among the dangers of the torrid zone. He is near the sorrowing, near the joyful; near the living, near the dying; He is everywhere; "He is nigh unto all who call upon Him, unto all who call upon Him in truth."

My dear children, let us implore His divine blessing at all times. We need it always, in poverty and in prosperity, in sickness and in health, in grief and in happiness. We need it when life smiles upon us with all its delights, that we may never be forgetful of our duties; we need it to remind us, that we were not born merely to enjoy the enchantments of this world, but that we have to toil, also, for others, though our task often becomes a labour of love; we want it in times of trouble and distress to support our weakness, when the weight of affliction would crush us; we require it in hours of gloom, to be a lamp to our feet, a torch to our understanding. But do not expect, my dear children, when you call upon the Lord, that wonders will, by His infinite bounty, be wrought in your favour. You have heard of the rod of Aaron blossoming and yielding leaves and flowers; of the birds of the air feeding the prophet; you have read the marvellous narrative of the passage of the Red Sea, as recorded in Holy Writ. Yet those miracles were accomplished in centuries of darkness, when it seemed necessary to awaken the nations of the earth from their torpor, by signs

and tokens appealing irresistibly to the mind, and through it to the heart. You must not suppose, when you pray to the Almighty in your poverty, that your cold hearth will blaze immediately with cheering fires, that your empty shelves will suddenly be replenished, or that your scanty rags will be transformed into luxurious clothing. You must not think, when in dire sickness you cry to the Lord, that your sufferings will instantly cease, that the blessings of health will at once replace the trials of agonizing pain. You must not imagine, when, in difficulty or in danger, you lift up your hands to God, that heavenly messengers will descend on angels' wings, and clear away from your path the impeding stones or wounding thorns. No, such is not the help which the Omnipotent, in His divine goodness, vouchsafes to those who fervently appeal to Him for aid. Encouraged by the belief, that miracles might be accomplished for their salvation from peril, the listless and indolent would move lazily through life; the thoughtless, the extravagant, would rush on in their unbridled career, wildly endangering their peace and their honour, in the conviction that all evil would soon be cured, if, in the hour of need, they should only pray to God for assistance.

To call upon the Lord in truth, is to beseech His mercy in humility, in earnestness; it is to pray, that He may fortify us to do our duty, enable us

to struggle on through surrounding difficulties, that His heavenly power may help us to vanquish dangers, be they assailing foes from without, or internal enemies more formidable still; that His beneficence may give us glad hope, when our courage is sinking, resignation to bear bodily torture and mental anguish, and permit us, with glowing zeal and unwearied energy, to serve Him, by serving our brethren with untiring devotedness.

“The Lord is nigh unto all who call upon Him in truth.” He is nigh unto the little children, who pray to Him in purity and innocence; when they feel oppressed with sorrow, His blessing dries their tears, and His paternal hand lulls them to rest. He is nigh unto the footsore wanderers, who cry unto Him from the depth of their distress; when the road of life leads them into the wilderness, it is He who sustains them, that they may not succumb on their journey. And again, when, arrived at the goal, they call upon Him in truth, He is nigh; and His divine arm lifts them over the mysterious boundary, which divides the chequered valleys of earth from the glorious spheres, where sunshine and peace are everlasting.

IV.

ON PERSEVERANCE.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

Those who are anxious to impart instruction from texts in the Holy Bible, every line, almost every word of which is full of admirable lessons, find themselves constantly reverting to the Book of Proverbs. Nor am I less frequently led to that inexhaustible source of wisdom; and as I learn to understand and to prize the meaning of the great philosopher's precepts, I feel desirous to explain it to you, fondly hoping, that you may lend a willing ear to such precious rules of life, and be faithfully guided by them throughout your earthly career.

Let me to-day draw your attention to the following beautiful words, which, if always remembered by you, cannot fail to prove of inestimable value: "Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands" (Prov. xiv. 1). My dear children, it takes a long while to build a house; the ground must first be cleared, and a solid foundation prepared; many thousand stones or bricks are required for the construction of even the humblest dwelling; each

stone or brick must be separately laid on, joined by cementing mortar; then there are numerous beams needed to support the building; and after many weeks, or months, or even years of labour, the fabric receives its protecting roof.

King Solomon never meant, that women should build their own abodes in the literal sense of the word; and yet they raise the habitations of their loved ones far better, far more substantially than the hewers of stone and cleavers of wood, and the innumerable labourers, who have at their command all the mighty trees of the forest, all the granite of stupendous rocks, all the quarries of the earth, all the metals of mines vast and deep; for the houses framed of wood and stone and iron may be swept away by floods, or consumed by fire; while the edifice which the wise woman constructs, defies the angry elements, the raging storms, the scorching flames. It is not easily shaken, for it rests on pillars of love; it is guarded by the affection and devotion of faithful hearts; it is protected, it is upheld, it is surrounded by good angels, by those angels of the Lord, who are called upon to achieve great and noble triumphs over the dangers of this world, by unwearied patience, by unconquerable perseverance, by indefatigable activity, by cheerful industry, by that ever-watchful attention to the duties of life, which renders their conscientious fulfilment imperative, by hope shedding its radiance

over the darkest hours, and by faith, that golden link, which connects earth and heaven.

If masons and bricklayers need so much time to complete a house, you will easily understand, my dear children, that the wise woman requires indeed a long period to build up her dwelling; and if thousands of bricks are wanted, will she not have to toil slowly and laboriously with industrious hands—will she not have to rise early and to retire late—that her house, the abode of her happiness, which is to shelter all those dearest to her, may be proof against besetting outward dangers, and not crumble or decay from internal weakness?

My dear children, I ardently hope, that each of you will ever strive to be good and pious, and I fervently pray, that, with the blessing of the Almighty, you may become wise and zealous, and raise mansions of strength and beauty, realizing the admirable words of the sage monarch, and resembling the glorious picture of the virtuous woman painted by him with unfading colours. It is a picture which all should keep in vivid recollection.

You may smile at the idea of building a house; but if you really feel anxious to be useful to yourselves and others, you must begin early to lay the foundation of the goodly structure; and you can scarcely commence the work too soon.

The Almighty has given you health, the greatest of blessings; He has given you affectionate friends and experienced teachers to lead you along the path of virtue and kindliness. And certainly, joyous, happy childhood is the best time for learning, for collecting those treasures of knowledge, which the sacred writers declare to be more precious than rubies. You have at present no cares, no apprehensions, to weigh you down and to rob you of activity and energy; no anxieties to interpose their threatening clouds between this day and the following morn; no sorrows and sufferings of the past, to fling their dismal veil over the brightness of your gleeful hours. You may have known sickness, but it has left no trace behind; for your young years are full of vigour, and they easily conquer sore disease.

I feel convinced, my dear children, that you all wish to do your duty; but the mere intention is not sufficient, although it is the first step towards goodness, the foundation of the house which the wise woman buildeth. You must learn to carry your heart's desire into faithful practice, so that the exercise of the best qualities may become habitual to you, and that good actions and the fulfilment of your obligations may not be occasional enjoyments, luxuries resorted to at times to please and satisfy your better feelings, or deeds of penance performed in order to pacify a restless, up-

braiding conscience. I would strongly impress upon you, my dear children, the necessity of placing punctuality, order, and industry among the most highly valued habits of your life.

It is only by sustained diligence, and by unswerving perseverance, that you can hope to acquire knowledge, and especially to obtain the power of conquering obstacles, of vanquishing difficulties, that power so inestimable at all times, and which, in later years, must prove of the greatest importance to you, whatever your position, whatever your wants and aims may be. Without indefatigable industry, the ant could not fill her granary; without regularity, without order, the bee could not erect her wondrous palace, nor construct those myriads of translucent chambers, every one of which is a model of architecture. And the wren, could she, without constant activity, without assiduous application, make the cradle of her young, that masterpiece of beautiful and curious weaving? It is composed, my dear children, of countless blades of grass and of fragrant hay, of the perfumed petals of flowers, of leaflets, and of minute bits of straw; it is lined with softest moss, with finest wool, with silken feathers. And if that aerial habitation formed by the parent bird, requires so much labour, if the wren undertakes so many journeys over enamelled fields and blooming gardens in search of materials for the dwelling of her little ones,

how incessant should be the thoughtful exertions of the woman who would finish and adorn her own house?

It is true, my dear children, that there are unavoidable interruptions, often interfering with the faithful accomplishment of duty; and though such hindrances are much to be regretted, yet, if you have succeeded in acquiring habits of diligence and perseverance, you will not find it difficult to resume your occupations, when the disturbing circumstances shall have ceased to exist. On the contrary, you will apply to your task, to the zealous labour of your life with renewed energy and with increased ardour, after the inevitable suspension of manual and mental efforts. Remember, my dear children, that however great the variety may be in your pursuits hereafter, however wide the difference in your respective positions, the duties to be performed remain the same for all. And recollect, also, that for this fulfilment you will always require the exercise of those qualities, the high value of which has been often taught and shown to you.

The order which reigns throughout nature is truly admirable. Every hour and every day seem to have their appointed work; every month brings forth its own buds and blossoms, its own birds warbling in bower and grove, its own insects buzzing and spinning in the light of heaven. And the

seasons, how regularly do they appear with their advantages and their delights! Winter's gloom is succeeded by the brightness of spring, whose balmy breath loosens the fetters of the ice-bound earth and clothes it with fresh verdure: then comes summer with its lovely flowers, with its ripening harvests for all mankind; and, lastly, autumn, with its glowing tints, and its horn of plenty, its oil, and its wine, and its wealth of beautiful fruit. And as order prevails in every part of our planet, and among the starry hosts of the universe, so it is one of the principal conditions of a well-regulated day, of a well-organised house. The absence of it causes a waste of time, of health, of life; the value of the swift hours, lost in looking for that which has been mislaid, is incalculable. Our enjoyment of youth and vigour might be doubled, if we moved as regularly through the day, fulfilling our duties at morn, noon, and eve, as the hands of the clock, which mark the flight of time, glide over the dial.

Industry is an everflowing source of blessings; it brings not only all necessities within our reach, but it imparts to them the charm of luxuries. The abode of useful activity cannot be otherwise than cheerful. By word and deed and example, the industrious woman teaches all those around her the importance of labour and its reward; when the members of the domestic circle re-assemble after the toils and fatigues of the day,

they find, that she, too, has worked for them; that comfort and cleanliness wrought by the unwearied diligence of her hands, pervade the dwelling; they are met by beaming smiles of contentment; and surely, a better welcome could not have been prepared for them. You have, no doubt, repeatedly been told, that patience is needed to bear, not merely the minor annoyances and vexations, which every day has in store, but the great and inevitable disappointments of our earthly career, and that perseverance is required from day-break till sunset, to overcome difficulties and to obtain success: you have also often heard, that gentleness is necessary to ensure willing obedience, to cause good advice to find its way to the depths of the heart, and that there must be benevolence at home to make happiness possible. By the conscientious development and application of all these qualities, the wise woman buildeth up her house. She needs for her work neither wood, nor bricks, nor mortar; her children are the props of her habitation; love is the fire that burns on the hearth, and illumines it with the brightest rays. Her door is open to those who seek help; she cheers, she encourages, she consoles; her watchfulness extends over all: and the blessing of God rests upon her dwelling.

The edifice you have to build, my dear children, and for which you are now collecting materials, may

prove an abode of peace, joy, and affection, even if unadorned with pomp and dazzling splendour: for all classes may find much real enjoyment and true happiness in the world. The roof, which protects our greatest treasures on earth, our parents, brothers, sisters, and children, requires no painting and gilding; the floor, which they cross with buoyant step and cheerful heart, wants no luxurious carpet; the couch, on which limbs, weary with the useful labours of the day, seek repose, needs not the softening down of the Eider bird. These are superfluities, which, like rich garments or delicacies for the palate, do not contribute to the genuine felicity of life.

The plainest apparel which protects us from the severity of winter snows, or from the intensity of the summer's glow, water from the fountain, bread to satisfy our hunger, meat to strengthen our sinews, are necessities; and with God's blessing, industry will provide them for us. And if sorrow or sickness should slacken or interrupt our patient labour, the Almighty will not let us want, for He is our protector in time of need. And surely, He will not forget the wise woman, who, with indefatigable hands, constructs her dwelling.

My dear young friends, we will not speak of the woman who plucketh her house down; that would be a scene too melancholy to contemplate. Let me rather exhort you to assist in rearing the beautiful

edifice of tranquillity and gladness; sisters, daughters may help, for every one is called upon to labour and to do good. Leave not your mission unfulfilled, exert your influence, and try to devote yourselves to the whole circle of your duties. Neglect not to pray at early morn, to offer supplications again ere sleep closes your eyelids; pray that God's heavenly power may sustain your endeavours, and that His divine blessing may attend your work. For you well know, that however skilful the workmen, "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it!"

V.

ON TRUTHFULNESS.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

If you read the account of the last blessings pronounced by Isaac, you will find it abounding in lessons and in warnings. It is, indeed, so suggestive, that scarcely any single portion of it can be selected as more suitable than another for the subject of our weekly discourse. Let us, therefore, endeavour to consider it in all its bearings, and try to understand the manifold examples which it contains. What must strike every reader of the holy writings, is the perfect simplicity, the lucid truth of the historical narrative; the faults and failings of the patriarchs are neither palliated nor concealed. Their highest virtues are not made more apparent to us than their errors and their sins, their foibles and their vices; and while we thus learn to emulate the former, we are taught to shun the latter.

In the history of Jacob, it is painful, though most instructive, to see, how the commission of one fault led him on to many other transgressions. When he first deceived his blind father, he probably

thought, that he should tell but one untruth; yet, he was soon caught in a net of his own weaving, from which he could extricate himself only by plunging more deeply into fraud and falsehood. He certainly received Isaac's blessing, but it must not for a single instant be supposed, that he owed this to his deceit. It was given by the divine will of Almighty God, who, for high purposes, inspired the blind patriarch to bestow it on his erring son; but that culpable son could never have gained it by his crafty, unbrotherly conduct. And here let me explain to you, my dear children, that the blessing which Jacob obtained was a national one of prosperity, success, and greatness, vouchsafed through him to his descendants, that they might be victorious in repelling the attacks of powerful enemies, and, while surrounded by idolators, might be able to keep the religion of the true and only God. But the internal, the personal blessing of peace and tranquillity of mind, Jacob did not enjoy. The happiness which flows from a pure conscience, and which all the glitter of worldly grandeur cannot give, which all earthly failures and disappointments cannot take away—that blessing Jacob could not reap. Far from it; his was a life of severe trials, and the obvious punishments he endured were great, various, and long-protracted. The real or supposed enmity of the brother whom he had so grievously offended and injured, embittered

tered his existence, and alarmed him so much with regard to his personal safety, that he believed himself obliged to fly from the home of his childhood and of his early youth, from the mother to whom he clung with the fondest love, and whom he was doomed never to see again on earth. He was oppressed by Laban during a lengthy period of servitude, and deceived not only by him, but also by his own children; he lost his favourite son for many years; and, towards the end of his life, he bewailed his numerous afflictions to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in the following sorrowful words: "My days have been few and evil, and have not attained to the years of my fathers in their pilgrimage."

Therefore, we cannot think, that, although he possessed the promise of the external, the great national blessing for his children and his descendants, he was a happy man. No, his fraud was justly, but severely, punished; and he remained a stranger to the reward of the virtuous, to the heavenly blessing of contentment and repose. My dear children, I am deeply anxious to impress upon you the love and reverence of truth, and the most uncompromising adherence to it, in deed, in word, and even in thought. That a fraud perpetrated to benefit ourselves, or to injure others, or with that double aim in view, is both a crime and a sin, you cannot doubt. To deprive others by deceit of their due, is to wrong them, is to rob them, and he who does

this, though perhaps not, in every case, amenable to the rigour, to the justice of the law, acts no less wickedly than the thief, who breaks into a house to carry off the owner's treasure, and stands ere long, at the prisoner's bar, an outcast, a convicted felon!

To be guilty of misrepresentation in order to benefit ourselves, is an offence, the punishment of which overtakes us very soon. The discovery of the falsehood is inevitable, and while it overwhelms us with shame and confusion must injure our prospects and our success in life. We may sometimes be tempted to conceal the truth, or even to utter lies, in the vain hope of screening ourselves from censure, and of avoiding the exposure of our faults. However great the temptation may be, however painful the humiliation of confessing our failings, the inducement to suppress the truth should be strenuously resisted. The frank acknowledgment of having done wrong, is, believe me, my dear children, the first step towards reformation. It is a step that leads to the voluntary expiation of past errors, and not only to self-imposed privations and sufferings, but often to a whole life of atonement and devotion. When the fair fame and the happiness of our fellow-mortals are concerned, few will doubt, that it becomes a duty, unhesitatingly to speak the truth; but I am afraid, there are some who think, that if, by withholding it, they injure only

themselves, they cannot incur much blame, nor do any serious harm: this, however, is a sad mistake. We ought not to excuse or to justify our faults, or even to veil them; we wrong ourselves incalculably, not only in the opinion of others, if detected, which sooner or later must be the case; nor because we forfeit the confidence, the regard, the esteem of our friends, but also, and perhaps chiefly, because the habit of concealing the truth, and placing falsehood in its stead, makes us gradually, though at first imperceptibly, lose ourselves in a maze, in a bewildering labyrinth of error.

The disregard of truth must unsettle and vitiate the character; having contracted the habit of misleading others, originally, it may be, about mere trifles, we soon mislead ourselves; and the rank luxuriance with which faults spring up and expand, is not unlike the excessive increase of ill weeds, often spreading over the fairest land, choking up the best seeds, blighting the brightest promise, and usurping the place of all that would otherwise have become good and beautiful. It cannot be too frequently repeated, that those who begin by deceiving others end by deceiving themselves. They lose the faculty of seeing clearly into their own minds, the power of reading their own hearts; they are like a ship without a rudder, without a compass, drifting about anyhow at the mercy of winds and waves, caught by the breeze, or shaken

by the blast, moving to and fro in purposeless activity on the rippling water, or storm-tossed by the angry billows, soon to be wrecked on granite rocks! These poor deceivers ere long mistake wrong for right, and right for wrong, until they sink, alas! like the ill-fated vessel, to rise no more.

Let me entreat you, my dear children, to be ever truth-telling, truth-seeking, truth-loving! You will not find it a difficult task; for truth is beautiful, and nothing is really good, nothing really great, nothing admirable, that is not true. Truth is the loftiest aim of art, truth is the noblest flight of genius. From the sculptor and painter we expect truth; from the historian we demand it; the highest branches of human lore are based upon immutable truths. Mathematics and all their unchangeable laws, which teach us not only to measure the girdle of the earth, to reach the heights of its mountains, and to sound the depths of its seas, but also permit us to understand the phases of the moon, the orbits of the planets, the fiery track of comets, the distances of myriads of stars, of suns, of worlds, all shining and flaming in the immensity of the universe, are great truths, which the beneficence of the Almighty has allowed us to study and to acquire.

Truth is a bright mirror, reflecting faithfully not only the whole outward world, but also the

inner one which each of us carries in his breast. Truth is the light that dispels ignorance; by its rays we avoid being caught in the meshes of flattery, or in the still more dangerous snares of vanity; we learn self-knowledge, we see our weakness, and we discover our strength. Truth is the sincerest friend, the safest adviser, the best, the most impartial, the most discerning judge! What is conscience? Truth, approving the good and reproving the faulty. What is honesty? An upright bearing, a straightforward conduct, an undeviating and faithful adherence to truth in our actions, in our words, in our thoughts.

My dear children, ever let us be truthful with all around us, in our homes and in the world: let us be truthful in our speech, in our writings, and in communion with ourselves. In our prayers let us approach the Almighty with a humble and truthful spirit, and thus strive to worship in all purity the ever-living God of eternal truth!

VI.

GOD'S MERCY TO ISRAEL.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

The Lord has graciously proclaimed, through the mouth of His prophet, the following words of hope and encouragement: "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hosea xiv. 6).

The beauty of this simile can hardly be appreciated to its full extent by those who dwell in towns, and who may not have enjoyed many opportunities of admiring the glistening pearls of dew, with which the hand of the bountiful Creator decks all nature at daybreak. Though radiant to behold, they are not mere jewels of splendour adorning hills and valleys: after the cold hours of night, they are as drops of invigorating balm to the slender blade of grass and to the mighty oak, to the wild flowerets of the field, and to the lovely blossoms tended by the skill of man. They shine in myriads of golden cups, on blooming meadows, and in the perfumed corollas of blushing roses; they sparkle on the foliage of lofty trees, and on the verdure of rich pasture lands, that the browsing lambkins of the earth, that the birds of

heaven, that the countless insects of the air, may seek and find refreshment.

And after sunset, the re-appearing diamonds of dew are as a revival of strength to all that grows; for no day elapses without its dazzling and often scorching sunshine, without its glowing and perhaps parching warmth, without cutting winds, without dust or blight, without excessive brilliancy or darkness and gloom; but at eventide the dew descends from heaven to raise the drooping forms of shrubs and flowers, to purify them and to embellish them with its own brightness. The worm and the spider may have crept over leaf and bud, yet, ere long, hedges and gardens bathe their stained petals in gleaming dew from unclouded skies, and live on in renewed freshness.

My dear children, you may not often have seen a lily in all its loveliness; but you remember its tall, upright stem, its calyx of snowy whiteness, its sweet fragrance, its golden seed; and you know that it is called the emblem of virtue and of holiness. You have also read of the mountain of Lebanon, rising in majesty towards the firmament; it is, in our text, made the symbol of imperishable strength and power; it bears the time-honoured cedars with their innumerable silvery cones, with their wide-spreading branches, and their undying foliage; centuries have passed over them without impairing their grandeur.

You know, that the mightiest trees may be rocked by the tempest, and shaken by the storm; but if the far-extending roots be healthy and vigorous, the branches will soon revive; they will resist the shock of earthquakes, and put forth new boughs, even when apparently shattered by the lurid lightning of the clouds.

My dear children, the Almighty has promised to be unto us like the dew; He has promised, that our people shall grow as the lily; that Israel shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon. Indeed, the Lord's inexhaustible goodness has been, and is, like the dew, rekindling our hopes after the blind fury of angry passions has swept over us; after the cold winds of contempt and scorn have touched and frozen us with their chilling breath; after the withering blight of persecution has fallen upon our nation; after the chains of bondage have bent us low. God's heavenly blessing will be as celestial balsam unto our people, cleansing us from all stains. And as the dew-steeped grass-blades, leaves, and flower-cups, offer refreshment to lambkin, bird, and bee, so may the purity of our lives, so may our bright example, prove a crystal fountain of revival to all weary pilgrims. As the lily grows in uprightness and in beauty, bending neither to the right nor to the left, but raising her head towards the blue canopy of heaven, so shall we, by the divine grace of the Creator, grow in undeviating

rectitude, bearing in hearts as pure as the chalice of the spotless lily, the golden seeds of our holy religion for the sanctification and happiness of all mankind. And as Lebanon stretches forth his roots, and through all ages raises his summit, wreathed with evergreen splendour, so shall our people, blessed and sustained by faith in the boundless beneficence of the Omnipotent, live on in strength, in moral excellence, and in holiness. But, my dear children, although the Almighty allows the pearls and diamonds of dew to drop from heaven on meadow and vineyard, on the clover of the field, and on the flower-bed of the lawn; although He sends fertilizing showers, and fanning winds, and glowing sunshine, the rose would not bloom, the lily would not grow, the grape would not ripen, unless the industry of man pruned the vine, and weeded the garden. The Lord, in His unerring and beneficent wisdom, has graciously ordained, that we shall owe all our joys and all our happiness to diligent and conscientious labour; it is only when we toil with the energies of our mind, with the skill of our hands, to fulfil the manifold tasks of life, that we may confidently hope to reap blessings for our own fireside, and for many hearths and homes; and the more numerous those duties are, the greater is our usefulness, our ability of doing good, and the greater must be our satisfaction. But I firmly believe, my dear children,

that in addition to the obligations, which fall to the share of all human beings, we Israelites have some devolving upon us, which are peculiarly, imperatively our own. The conviction of being thus appointed to fulfil high destinies, must increase our energy, give ardour to our zeal, double our powers of action, and enhance our hopes of success.

You are aware, my dear young friends, that we form but a small portion of the human race, that, in all cities and countries of the globe, we are surrounded by those, whose religious opinions are different from our own.

You also know, that during the many centuries which have elapsed since the destruction of the Temple, we have been subjected to vicissitudes and sufferings, the faithful narrative of which, so truly and so deeply instructive, would demand the pen of the historian, the wisdom of the philosopher, the heart-studies of the moralist, the imagination of the poet, the eloquent lips of the orator, that it would, in fact, call into requisition the rarest combination of gifts and talents. Yet even those who are but imperfectly acquainted with the annals of the past, cannot doubt, that the trials endured by us, have left traces behind, not only among ourselves, but also in the minds of those living around us. It is our sacred duty to efface those marks and remnants of by-gone ages, to uproot the prejudices which may have been engen-

dered and to prove to the world, that a conscientious reading of the Holy Scriptures, while teaching us, in simple but indelible lessons, to abstain from all vices, sins, and crimes, convinces us, that there is no virtue, however lofty, to the practice of which the divine Volume does not powerfully exhort. No works, however admirable and beautiful, that have been written since the revelation of our holy religion, and since the inspired books of our prophets and kings, can, with any degree of truth, be held to supersede the moral instructions of the Bible. Yes, my dear children, the Old Testament, old, but eternally new, not losing its vigour or its freshness by passing through centuries, and being handed down to all generations of men, the Old Testament, increasing, if possible, in immortal beauty, contains laws and precepts, which apply to the emergencies of every day in our existence, and which, if followed zealously, would, unless counteracted by human frailty or passion, indeed lead us near perfection.

My dear children, let us then actively work to exalt our brethren in birth and faith, to raise them in the eyes of the whole world, of those large majorities which encompass a feeble, but not insignificant minority, feeble indeed as regards worldly position and power, but not so, if we consider, what its moral influence might be, and if we remember, that the history of the world does not record a greater law-

giver than Moses, a greater philosopher than Solomon, a greater poet than David, although thirty centuries, fraught with countless changes, have rolled by, since they wrote, and spoke, and sang.

My dear children, we must strive to prove, that the hostile feelings which have been fostered against us by ages of oppression, are unwarranted; we must destroy them, not by self-praise, not by assertions of our virtue, but by conscientious efforts; by a blameless conduct throughout life; by an unflinching devotion to all those whose welfare we may be able to promote: by zealous and active sympathy with all who suffer, who labour, and who triumph. The oppressed want our aid and our tears of tender solicitude; the toiling, our help and encouragement; and the successful, our smiles, our applause, to urge them on to renewed exertions. We have an arduous task before us, but a noble one, which may, indeed, kindle the most glowing enthusiasm, and fill our hearts with the purest, the highest ambition. We are called upon to dispel the shadows, that have gathered around us through centuries of severe trials, to win, by constant endeavours, the entire approbation of the communities amongst which we dwell; we must crave justice at their hands; and can obtain it only by challenging, for the moral beauty of our work, the esteem, not merely of individuals, for that is more

easily gained, but of whole nations, whose judgment is warped by old and deeply-seated prejudices.

Do you understand the full import of our duty? Do you feel, that we have to claim a position, which is our birth-right, and which, with God's blessing, we can and will reconquer? My dear children, though young and inexperienced, you may be able to do some good in the world. Throughout nature, the smallest living beings have a sphere of usefulness assigned to them by the will of the Almighty Creator. You, who are endowed with powers of intellect and with warm feelings of the heart, can surely, by constant, well-sustained efforts, prepare yourselves efficiently for the great labours of your earthly career.

It is very true, that in after-life, no less than in the earliest years of childhood, a searching glance into the recesses of the mind, will reveal to us our weakness and our faults; and that an attentive ear, listening eagerly to the voice of conscience, will audibly hear warning sounds of rebuke and censure; it has been so decreed by the goodness and wisdom of the Lord. But it is equally true, that the most penetrating scrutiny into the mysteries of the heart and soul, will not disclose to us the entire secret of our strength; for the Almighty has graciously ordained, that the indefatigable exercise of our energies alone shall fully develop

our abilities; and that success shall be the reward of great and uninterrupted labours. Not any of us know the limit of our powers; we can but work on zealously, making good use of the mental and moral gifts beneficently vouchsafed to us by the grace of God; we can but invoke His heavenly blessing to support us, to give us health and courage, that we may not grow weary nor disheartened, nor leave our task unaccomplished.

My dear children, the Holy Bible says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself;" but it appears, humanly speaking, impossible to love those who despise us; we can but fear or shun them. It is only by winning the esteem of our neighbours, that we may really hope to love them in obedience to the divine precept: and this forms an additional proof of the beauty, wisdom, and excellence of the heavenly commandment. In order to love our brethren and to be loved by them, we must learn to forbear and to forgive, to be ever truthful and truth-seeking, to be just, yet merciful, to pluck envy from our breast, egotism from our thoughts, to practise self-denial and even self-sacrifice; we must learn to banish apathy, and to replace it by enthusiastic devotion to the highest interests of mankind, so that we may be able to exert all our energies for the advancement and happiness of others. And then, indeed, will the heavenly blessing rest upon our destinies, and then the Lord

will be as the dew to the descendants of Jacob, and our people will be rich in virtue and great in good deeds, an example to all the nations of the earth; and then Israel will grow as the lily, and raise his head in purest moral beauty and holiness; and, encircled with unfading brightness, he will cast forth his roots in strength and in vigour as Lebanon, the imperishable mountain of cedars!

VII.

THE ENDLESS LOVE OF GOD.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS.

There is not one among us, not even the youngest child, who has been taught to worship the Lord and to praise His divine name, that does not feel, how gracious our heavenly Father is to us all. Has He not made the sun to warm us, and to shine by day, the moon and stars to shed their brilliancy by night? Has He not caused the wheat to grow for the sustenance of man, and the grass of the fields for the lambkins and kine? Has He not made the animals of the earth subservient to us? Has He not created them for our benefit, that their flesh may nourish us, that their skin, their fur, and their feathers, may be transformed into necessities, comforts, or luxuries, for our enjoyment; that the milk of the cow and the honey of the bee may flow in abundance to sweeten the cup of our life? Has He not given the oil of the olive to light our dwellings, the juice of the grape to fill our goblets, the fruit of the orchard to refresh us, the verdure

of hill and dale to delight our eyes, the beautiful flowers of meadow and garden, with their fragrance and their healing qualities, to charm and to serve us from our cradle to our grave? Perhaps you do not know, my dear children, that these blossoms of loveliness possess properties to allay pain, and give slumber, during which we forget past sufferings, and gain new strength for the accomplishment of our duties and our labours.

The bounty of the Lord is lavished upon all His children, in all lands and in all climes. The golden oranges, which the poor boy offers for sale here at the corner of the busy thoroughfare, ripen in perfumed bowers, under the blue skies of Spain and Italy; the cocoa-nuts which he vends in our markets, are productions of the torrid zone, where the wonderful tree that bears them, is said to yield advantages as numerous almost as the days of the year, and, indeed, too manifold to mention. There are, however, melancholy beings, whom the knowledge of the boundless beneficence of the Almighty, and of the blessings which He vouchsafes to us, does not preserve from despondency. They may have seen so much sickness and misery at home, such infirmities and sufferings, that adversity makes their hearts grow faint.

My dear children, let us strengthen ourselves to bear all trials, and to encourage the dejected and the despairing, by the following words of the

Psalmist: "the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, nor keep His anger for ever" (ciii. 8, 9). That the Lord God Almighty is gracious and benevolent, the countless treasures granted by His goodness prove to us at all times. We are never sufficiently grateful for them; and yet, my dear children, we feel the absence or the loss of a single one of those blessings as a great privation, as a real affliction. The limbs whose strength and activity enable us to move through crowded towns, to enjoy the beauties and wonders of nature, in sunny glades and shady forests, by the banks of gently gliding rivers, or on the shores of the mighty deep, are not duly prized by us; nor are the hands, by means of which we labour, nor the ear, and eye, and voice, which connect the heart and mind with the external world, nor is health appreciated enough; otherwise we should not so frequently imperil its vigour. But when any one of the great gifts, which contribute to the happiness and enjoyment of life, is removed, or even curtailed of its fair proportions, then we learn, how valuable a boon we have lost, and how great is the loving-kindness of the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth, who bestowed it upon us. And the dangers, from which we escape at every moment, are they not innumerable, and are we not always encompassed by them? Is it not His

divine hand, that shields us at home and abroad, on sea and on land, whilst sailing over the angry waves of the fathomless ocean, whilst travelling on those iron roads, along which we are propelled by the extraordinary powers of steam, or merely whilst crossing the streets, which extend through our huge cities, and where the turmoil of commercial life constantly threatens our safety and even our existence?

And yet, day after day, we pass through them unharmed; for God protects us, and He interposes His buckler and His all-powerful arm between our weakness, between our helplessness, and impending dangers. Yes, my dear children, "the Lord is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger." A conscientious examination of the depths of our hearts, will prove to us at eventide, how numerous are the faults, that stain our conduct, and yet our heavenly Father forgives us, for He knows our vacillation, our infirmity of purpose.

My dear children, He will not always chide, nor keep His anger for ever. There may be sickness at home, among our loved ones; long-continuing sickness, causing us overwhelming anxiety, care so constant and so harassing, that every moment becomes filled with sorrow, if not with bitterness, that the knowledge of God's goodness and mercy is scarcely sufficient to sustain our courage, and that all the blessings still left to us appear as

nought. The Lord may afflict us personally with illness; we may endure not only bodily pain, but mental anguish also, when we feel that we have been withdrawn from our circle of usefulness, and that those whom we cherish most dearly will suffer, because we are laid low by misfortune. Or death may have bereft us of the friends whose presence made our life beautiful; grief and mourning may have wrought a complete change in us, deprived us of all energy, of all hope, plunged us into dark despair, seemingly beyond the reach of the faintest glimmering of light. When pain, and grief, and adversity, have completely overpowered us; when we have almost ceased to pray for happiness, and to believe in the possibility of its return; when all is gloomy and cold, bleak, dreary, and desolate, around us; then it is, that, through the infinite tenderness and compassion of the Almighty, a new spring blooms in our heart, in our home, and in our life.

My dear children, when the goodly harvests have been gathered in; when even the flowers of the field have fallen under the sickle of the reaper; when the vineyard has lost its purple and amber clusters; when the orchard has yielded its luxuriant treasures; when the keen autumnal winds have blown over the land, and swept away all the beauty and brilliancy of gardens, woods, and forests, all the emerald, golden or ruby leaves of

elm, beech, and oak; when the ground is hard and bare, and the naked stems look like grim skeletons; then, when nature seems to have relinquished every charm, spring comes again with fresh beauties, with new delights. The meadows and hedges adorn themselves for young and old; myriads of silver daisies, those "bright eyes of day," re-appear; violets nestle in the grass, and scent the air with their sweet breath; wild roses precede their fairer sisters; there are pearly blossoms in the orchard, there is lightly waving foliage on the trees, there is sunshine in the vault of heaven, and through the valleys of earth, and there are blithe birds in groves and bowers, pouring forth their songs of gladness into the bright expanse above. And in our hearts too, my dear children, spring smiles once more through the mercy of the Lord. We do not forget our lost felicity, nor our past sufferings; no, the veil of everlasting regrets softens our fresh joys, and casts a solemn tranquillity over the new sources of happiness around us; but our anguish belongs to by-gone times, our sadness fades away, and we are again able to prize the blessings of God's beneficence.

Yet, it is true, my dear children, that some among us are tried and chastened by sorrow, which becomes almost a constant companion, not leaving us until we sink into the grave.

But even the afflicted cannot doubt the goodness of the Lord, whose decrees are indeed inscrutable, but who graciously extended to us an anchor of hope, when He said, that "although the dust shall return to the earth whence it came, the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Thus, when the bodily frame, worn out by the toils and sufferings of this world, is consigned to the tomb, our heaven-born, immortal soul rises, on wings of light, to the throne of the Almighty Creator, to worship Him in those realms of bliss, where cares and tears are unknown.

VIII.

ON INDUSTRY.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

You have frequently been told, how sinful it is to cast looks of envy around you, to covet the possessions of others, the treasures that meet your eye, be they broad acres covered with teeming cornfields, or rich orchards and beauteous gardens; be they houses, jewels, silver and gold, or treasures far greater still, such as the sympathy, the love and devotion of our fellow-citizens, or great intellectual acquirements, eminence of position, success, and fame. To be grasping is a real misfortune; it destroys the serenity, the peace of mind of those who are afflicted with longings and cravings which they cannot control; it renders them dissatisfied at home and abroad; it makes their society dreaded and shunned by friends, upon whom fortune may have smiled more brightly, and who, whilst the angry eye of envy rests upon them, cannot truly enjoy the advantages which have fallen to their share. The covetous themselves are not able to appreciate the blessings which they receive from the beneficence of the Lord, and thus their guilty

feelings meet with punishment at every moment of the day. And you have frequently been told, my dear children, that amidst much apparent inequality of station, among many real or supposed, necessary and inexplicable, varieties of situation, there is more true equality on earth than we are apt to think; and that enjoyments and happiness are, by the grace and goodness of God, within the reach of all those who will make strenuous exertions to obtain and to merit them.

We are repeatedly and earnestly reminded in the Holy Volume, that the Providence of the Lord has bestowed upon us powers and energies, by the exercise of which we may acquire many valuable benefits; and the royal philosopher truly says: "He that dealeth with a slack hand, becometh poor; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich" (Prov. x. 4). Believe me, my dear children, that in whatever position the divine will may have placed us, we shall always find industry to be one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon us. Even among those who do not require to labour for their daily bread, who are far above want, and within whose reach are all the so-called luxuries of this world, even among them the absence of industry is the bane of life. Not merely do the hours of the day glide heavily by the indolent, yielding neither pleasure to themselves, nor producing any advantages for those around

them, whereas the leisure of the rich should become fertile in good deeds for countless thousands of human beings; but those who live in apathy change into drops of gall the most precious moments of their existence, while every instant should, on the contrary, be valued as a pearl beyond price.

Inactivity causes the idle to concentrate their thoughts chiefly upon themselves; and every cloud-let sailing across their horizon seems to press heavily upon their brow, while sloth renders them unable to overcome difficulties, and utterly incapable of dealing with the real anxieties, which may disturb their tranquillity; for even the wealth of the Indies does not keep aloof annoyances, vexations, and injuries; though the poor are often inclined to suppose, that the rich do not know the weight of care. The sluggish transform molehills into mountains: the industrious make obstacles as lofty as Alpine peaks, and as hard as rocks, disappear by their efforts; they take delight and pride in removing them by their activity, by their perseverance. The slothful deem labour an intolerable, an unbearable burden, while its duties help the energetic to travel cheerfully over the road of life, giving interest to every passing hour, filling the heart of the earnest labourer with the consciousness of well performed work, making his day of rest, after the exertions of the week, a

real holiday, a time free from harassing considerations, full of happy feelings, of deep gratitude for the blessings of health, so truly appreciated and so well employed. Yes, industry maketh rich, and if not always in worldly goods, certainly in satisfaction, in delight, in contentment, thus converting necessities into luxuries, and imparting their beauty and brilliancy to every advantage, which we are able to provide by the diligent labour of our hands or of our minds. But in truth, activity increases our resources, and if we sometimes fail to convince ourselves of it in our homes, believe me, my dear children, our view is rendered less clear by the eagerness which we feel for success. We always hope for greater prizes than we can ever obtain; our expectations are never fully realized; even if we acquired all the material benefits anticipated by us, they would not afford to our wishes the enjoyments which they so abundantly promised. But looking around us at the endeavours of our brethren, we can exercise our judgment more calmly; and such deliberate survey of the efforts of industry and their reward, will prove replete with invaluable lessons.

My dear children, if we leave the brick walls of dusty towns, and picture to ourselves the busy scenes of country life, we shall find the good farmer employed from morning till night, and during the whole year. The land would not bring forth

pasturage for herds and flocks, unless it had been drained and fertilized; nor would it be covered with those bright meadows beautifully enamelled with flowers, on which the kine and lambkins graze, and where myriads of bees swarm and collect their sweets. The earth would not yield her cornfields, waving with golden harvests, the food of rich and poor, if the husbandman had not prepared the soil ere he entrusted the seed to its furrows. It is very true, my dear children, that all blessings come from Almighty God; that rain and sunshine, light and warmth, and the reviving dews of heaven, are gifts of His beneficence, which make the germs rise from the depths of the land, and swell into maturity; but it has been ordained by His divine will, that those blessings shall be gained by indefatigable hands, that they shall be earned by the exertions of man.

After having toiled during the glaring heat of the summer months, the farmer continues to work in the cooler autumn season; the crops must be reaped, the ears of wheat bound into sheaves, carried to the granary, the corn separated from the straw, and the former again divided from the chaff by winnowing. In gardens and orchards the same activity is required, if good results are to be obtained. Spiders and noxious insects, if not carefully removed, will prey on the produce destined

to fill our markets, and to supply the tables of the wealthy as well as to appease the hunger of the needy. Birds, unless continually warded off, will feast on the choicest fruit of the orchard, making it unfit for human consumption; and blight and drought will annihilate the loveliness of the fairest flowers, unless the gardener be ready to supply cleansing and refreshing streams. My dear young friends, in our homes there is constant activity demanded; there is work for every hour of the day; there is more necessity in our households, than even in the most luxuriant orchard, for diligent care and constant industry. But as in a garden or field, one person cannot execute every task, so by our own fireside many must labour, and each help individually to accomplish the good that is to be wrought by all. There are the little children to be gently nursed, and watched over, and tenderly cared for; the elder sons and daughters to be taught, and trained, and advised, that they too may help to earn the daily bread, and that, by patient perseverance, they may assist in banishing poverty, which leaves the hearth cold, the shelves bare, the room comfortless, and the limbs unprotected against the inclemency of changeful skies.

It is well and useful always to remember the beautiful precept contained in the Book of Proverbs: "Let us go to the ant, and consider her ways." All of us should exercise unremitting

diligence in our sphere of action, for without it we cannot hope ever to be rich in worldly possessions, or, what is more valuable by far, in good deeds. It is only by assiduous efforts that we can obtain affluence, which places us above the pressure of want, and enables us to give largely to others. It is very true, that some own considerable wealth without having toiled to acquire it. They are indebted for it to the conscientious exertions of their parents, to those who came before them, and whose labours were attended with success; for no advantages are owing to mere chance. Even the rich incur the risk of becoming poor, when they lead an existence of sloth or carelessness. Earnest, zealous industry is the blessing, is the rule of life; indolence is the exception. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," whatever the calling of the industrious may be.

Sculptors, who carve noble statues out of cold stone, while enriching the world with beautiful works of art, create for themselves the greatest treasures of enjoyment; architects, who fill the land with wondrous buildings, find their reward in augmenting the splendour of cities and kingdoms; musicians, whose melodious strains pervade the earth, in adding to the wealth of harmony, live in a sphere of delight. Men successfully engaged in commerce, increase the resources and civilization of the great human family; lawyers, if, indeed, they reach the

highest branches of legal eminence by indefatigable labours, materially extend the circle of our general knowledge; and divines, who have made theology their anxious study, and who, deeply imbued with the word of God, labour for their fellow-beings, do they not grow rich, if not in tangible goods, in noble thoughts and aspirations, in fervent hopes for the progress and felicity of those committed to their care?

My dear children, we should not underrate the advantages, nor undervalue the power, of wealth. The Almighty, in His wisdom and justice, has, indeed, ordained, that riches shall not enable us to buy for ourselves aught that secures real happiness; not parents when the call of death has robbed us of them; not sons nor daughters; not brothers, nor sisters, nor friends, nor love, nor devotion, nor talent, nor youth, nor health, nor sleep, nor any of the great blessings and enjoyments which make life delightful. But although it is impossible not to acknowledge with heart and mind, that there are treasures far superior to all that can be obtained from Californian mines; yet the possession of gold may, in generous hands, become the means of conferring lasting benefits on thousands of human beings.

There are, however, moral and intellectual riches, far more precious still, which become valueless only when left unused. Activity of

mind transforms confused ideas into well-defined thoughts; vague impressions, into clear opinions and deep convictions; lofty aims, conceived with glowing enthusiasm, into plans and projects carefully elaborated, which, if carried out with ardent zeal, become beautiful realities. The unwearied exercise of kindness and devotion increases our power to share the woes and joys of others; we become rich in sympathy, in solicitude, in fellow-feeling for all around us. And remember, my dear children, that we can never exhaust the treasures of the heart. On the contrary, the more we expend, the more we shall acquire; for the reward of doing good is so incalculably great, that it never fails to awaken noble sentiments and emotions in the soul, and to stimulate us to renewed efforts. I do not speak of the delight of receiving marks of gratitude from those whom we have been so fortunate as to serve; however encouraging such proofs of our successful endeavours may be, we ought not to expect or demand them, lest disappointment should damp our ardour. But the applauding voice of conscience is a recompense no less precious than the improvement achieved by us with divine aid, and the example and impulse given by our exertions. Thus, my dear children, we shall have the happiness of seeing, that the hand of the diligent maketh rich. Yes, the hand that labours in obedience to the dictates

of the mind, the hand that works and heals, gives and supports; our hand, so blessed, makes us rich in good deeds, and makes those rich in contentment to whose wants it is our valued privilege to minister.

IX.

THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

In the narrative of a life so powerfully interesting as that of King David, we find manifold suggestions for earnest thought and deep meditation. One of the most remarkable features in the Biblical record of that monarch's eventful career, is the account of the soothing influence exercised by his melodious strains over Saul in his great affliction; for we read in the First Book of Samuel: "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam. xvi. 23).

There can be no doubt, that what is called the evil spirit, was the despondency, into which the unhappy sovereign sank when preyed upon by agonies of remorse, and which, at times, deepened into melancholy madness, or rose to paroxysms of violent frenzy. In his stubborn haughtiness, he defied the dictates of the prophet, and the punishment

which fell upon him, was so overwhelming, that the pomp and splendour of a throne, the possession of beauteous lands, flowing with milk and honey, and the unlimited sway over millions of human beings, were unavailing to yield peace and serenity to the victorious prince, who was tortured by self-reproaches; while David, then a poor shepherd boy, but sustained by ardent faith in the protection of heaven, endured great sufferings, bore incessant persecutions, and was yet deemed an object of envy by the anointed of the Lord.

My dear children, it cannot be too frequently repeated, that happiness is incompatible with the infringement of duty. But our text proves the infinite mercy of God, who, while chastising, does not crush the erring soul: thus the King's fearful agitation was permitted to be allayed by the power of David's tuneful harp. Many have felt, that the gift of music, bestowed more particularly on the children of Israel, from the days of the inspired Psalmist down to the present time, and abiding among us during many centuries of oppression, has been graciously vouchsafed by divine goodness for great and beneficent objects, has been given to calm and uphold us in dark and troubled hours, and in moments of gloom or despair, to raise the mind, on the high-soaring wings of hope, to the throne of Almighty God.

Music is, indeed, one of the loftiest modes of

human expression. What is poetry, but the music of feeling and imagination; and eloquence, but the music of noble ideas, of sublime aspirations? Our ancestors were forbidden by the Lord to make graven images or likenesses of anything in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth, lest, in imitation of heathen practices, they should be tempted to kneel in adoration before idols, instead of worshipping the true and only God. Many wise and learned men have thought, that sculpture and painting, even for purposes of secular improvement and enjoyment, were but little encouraged amongst the Israelites, and that this was owing to the second commandment, which was considered, though no doubt erroneously, a prohibition even with regard to worldly embellishment and delight. But surely, in the present age, all will admit, that the cultivation of the fine arts elevates the mind, and is a humble but grateful appreciation, on our part, of the wondrous beauties with which the hand of God has so bountifully adorned the earth. Yet while plastic forms and pictorial representations recall, more or less admirably, all that can be perceived by the human eye, music expresses the highest impulses of the soul, the deepest yearnings of the heart. The thrilling lays of the minstrel King, the heir-loom of our nation, are sacred hymns, interpreting every emotion that can pervade the human breast. They speak

of intense suffering, of overpowering sorrow, of agonizing pain, of every pang of contrition, or reality of expiation: they contain balm for all wounds; fervid hope to cure all despair; faith, ardently glowing, to raise the downcast of all ages; prayers, unchangeably beautiful, for those whose souls are overshadowed, and whose longings are inarticulate; boundless gratitude for the hearts, and exalted piety for the minds of all generations.

Those immortal hymns, our solace in adversity, our valued companions in every circumstance of life, are deemed inestimable treasures, not merely by ourselves, but are prized by millions of human beings, who, though differing from us in creed, never assemble to worship the Almighty, without singing those holy Psalms, which David breathed in glorification of the Lord thousands of years ago, those solemn strains, which gently release the aching heart from the heavy chains of the world, and lift it, borne upward by hope, to our merciful Father in heaven.

Surely many have felt music to be a precious gift of the Omnipotent's inexhaustible bounty. How dull would this earth be, though arrayed in its dazzling charms, without the harmonies which re-echo throughout its expanse. They pervade all nature; we hear them in the softly murmuring zephyr, and in the mighty, rushing wind; in the gently rippling fountain, in the wildly gushing tor-

rent, or in the majestic waves moaning and expiring on the sea-shore. They rise from the furrows of the ploughed field, or from amidst the golden ears of ripening corn, and are carried by joyous birds to the gates of heaven. They rise from gardens and hedgerows, from woods and forests, diffusing gladness throughout the world. And even those who live in crowded towns and gloomy alleys, are often cheered in their weary journey through life by the sweet notes of some little bird living close by, in wooden cage, upon the humblest window-sill. And if the winds and waves, and all the winged choristers, fill the earth with music, should not the human voice ring to diffuse its harmony around us? It is not merely far more beautiful than all the other voices of creation, it exercises also a far greater, a far higher influence. The lessons that reach the ear most surely, and sink into the heart most deeply, are those conveyed by an earnest voice, gently attuned to teach, not only the docile and willing, but even the stubborn and refractory. The power of the voice, tremulous with emotion, can render that advice, which it is so difficult to give, and still more difficult to take, truly welcome and acceptable. And there is no weight, there is no burden, however heavy, which the voice of sympathy may not help to lighten; there is no affliction, however great, which the voice of love may not hope to assuage; there is no strife,

no violence and no passion, which the voice of devotion may not aid in calming. To comfort and to cheer in days of trial, to teach and to guide in times of prosperity, the human voice is all-powerful for good.

Written words, travelling across mountains and oceans, may partly indemnify us for the absence of dear friends; books, great, wise, and beautiful, may awaken noble thoughts in the mind; but the human voice alone exercises almost supreme influence over those confided, by divine Providence, to our care, over those who may be brought within the sphere of our duties. But few of us prize and enjoy sufficiently the blessings and energies placed in our possession by the All-merciful, nor do we make them contribute enough to the happiness of our companions along the road of life.

My dear young friends, let us fervently pray, that the words of our lips, be they lessons or even reproofs, or the mere expressions of our thoughts and feelings, may help to banish anger and discord. Let them be true, and pure, and free from harshness; let them be like music, ennobling and elevating our sentiments, and contributing to the harmony of the great family of God's children. And may our voices unite in jubilant chorus of thanksgivings to the Almighty, while, with loving and grateful hearts, we say: "Hallelujah! praised and ever blessed be the Lord!"

X.

“GUARD THY TONGUE FROM EVIL.”

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

Few will hesitate to avow, that want of gratitude to Almighty God, frequently causes us to pervert the blessings of His inexhaustible goodness, and to turn them into afflictions. The power of speech, for instance, which, perhaps, more than any gift of the Lord's beneficence, establishes our superiority, is often misused; and it is from the depths of my heart, that I say to each of you to-day, my dear children, in the words of the inspired Psalmist: “Guard thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.” Let me warn you against the dangerous practice of pointing out the faults of your neighbours to the notice and reprobation of the world. Let me remind you of the tenacity, with which injurious propensities cling to us, of the fearful rapidity of their growth, and of the insidious power they obtain over our thoughts, until we find it difficult, if not impossible, to extricate our better nature from their ever-tightening grasp.

To acquire good habits is the work of time; for

they are the result of deep reflection, of well-matured opinions, of heart-felt convictions; they are the daily and hourly expression of our sentiments, no longer enshrined in our minds and hearts but transformed into active realities, brightening and embellishing life with gentleness and patience, with kindness and forbearance. Fortunately, however, reprehensible habits do not usually spring from uncharitable feelings; and there is great consolation in knowing, that they are often the result of chance, and can, therefore, be more easily eradicated. They are like those weeds dropped into the earth by the travelling breeze, or sown by the bird in his joyous flight over blooming gardens, seen anywhere, everywhere, often near the fairest, sweetest flowers. Alas! there is never any lack of room for noxious weeds; they require no cultivation, they spread with marvellous quickness, they grow profusely in every soil, close to the brightest buds of loveliness, overshadowing them, robbing them of their nourishment, until those beauteous promises fade and die away, without having ever expanded into radiant fulfilment. And so it is with baneful habits. They are not necessarily the undivided possession of the wicked and sinful; many well-meaning persons thoughtlessly give way to them, not remembering how soon they gather strength to shroud the noblest qualities, and to dethrone every human virtue and excellence.

Among dangerous practices, that of evil-speaking is, unfortunately, a most prevalent one; it does not repel our friends and listeners sufficiently; for it often shows itself in a very alluring garb. It happens generally, that we speak ill of others, without having the remotest intention of wronging them; and then it is, that, strange to say, we mistake a really fatal and sinful disposition, for the mere exuberance of high spirits, for mirth, or the display of brilliant wit, and its gay train of jokes and jests. And in such moments we forget, that the so-called gleeful humour effervesces, and that all the much-admired, dazzling wit, shines and sparkles at the expense of others.

To many who are in search of amusement for themselves and their companions, the temptation of raising a smile or of calling forth peals of merriment, often becomes irresistible. Then the miserable foibles and blemishes of poor humanity, are paraded before a laughter-loving circle, placed in the most glaring light, to serve as targets for the missiles of irony, for the arrows of taunting sarcasm. But those arrows, although the mere play-things of the hour, are often poisoned weapons, more dangerous by far than the toys which heedless children toss about at random, and with which they sometimes, in mere sport, inflict serious wounds upon those they love best, as well as upon themselves. It is not difficult to entertain an idle,

frivolous audience, by ridiculing the shortcomings and defects of others, by holding up to derision any oddities of form and features, or peculiarities of voice and speech, of gait and manner. It is a mere pastime; but the darts of our quiver, carelessly flung about, with which we may hurt others, rebound on ourselves, and do us incalculable harm. The sinful weakness of looking around for imperfections vitiates our taste, and soon deprives us of the power of admiring, of appreciating, even of perceiving that which is really noble, excellent, and beautiful; and, believe me, there is much more to be prized and revered, than to be blamed and criticised among our fellow-beings.

At first our sarcastic speeches are mere playful fancies, meant to beguile a weary hour; but imperceptibly we learn evil-speaking, and then we dwell openly, not on mere trifling imperfections, but on the faults and failings of all around us; and this, my dear children, is a grievous sin. To speak ill of our neighbours heedlessly, by the mere unconquerable impulse and force of habit, is dangerous; but to do so with the intention of injuring anyone, is wicked. There can be no moral good, no advantage gained by exposing to the reprobation of the world the faults of our fellow-creatures; the sores and wounds of the sick are not unveiled to the gaze of the public by surgeons and physicians; yet the patients are not neglected,

their disorders are anxiously watched, and skilfully treated; and the sufferers recover, with the blessing of God, all the sooner because their wounds were closely bandaged and concealed from prying looks. Very often the faults which strike us most glaringly in others, may be mere specks and spots disfiguring the outward man, perhaps, but leaving the mind uncontaminated, the heart perfectly sound at the core. It is wrong, under any circumstances, to disparage our neighbour, and we are frequently liable to commit great injustice, when indulging in such ungenerous attempts. Either we scarcely know the persons whom we censure, and then we must be unconsciously guilty of misrepresentation; or we are acquainted with those whom, either in sport or in earnest, our tongue seizes upon for its attacks, and then the offence seems more unpardonable still; for it is impossible to associate with others, without discovering in them many valuable qualities, well calculated to extenuate, if not to counterbalance, their faults.

While taking a dispassionate survey of the character of our brethren, of their motives and actions, we cannot fail to trace the influence which sways them, the circumstances of birth, parentage, and early training, of health or sickness, of mental or moral organisation, circumstances, which either individually or when combined, may strongly control their destiny. It is a mistake to suppose,

that mere evil-speaking leaves the objects of our satire unharmed ; our briefest remarks calling attention to trifling faults, which would probably have remained unnoticed, or been overlooked, often, in passing quickly from mouth to mouth, are distorted into fearful calumnies or slanderous tales, marring the success, if not utterly destroying the prospects, of those whose conduct we have stigmatized, heedlessly perhaps, but far too audibly not to be overheard.

Libellous speech is unkindness, which stabs far more deeply than sword or bayonet on the field of battle ; for the wounds inflicted by the keenest steel may be healed by the aid of science and art, or closed by the releasing hand of death ; while those caused by unkindness, often rankle during long years, poisoning the happiness of a whole life. Even when the faulty themselves, whom we feel inclined to blame, do not seem to merit forbearance, let us guard our tongue from evil, lest we should hurt the feelings of loving friends, and thus mortify and humiliate the innocent, while we scarcely chastise the guilty. Let us, in conversation, and indeed at all times, throw a mitigating veil over the faults of others, noticing those imperfections only to recollect, that the attempt to eradicate them, and to prevent their recurrence, is among the most sacred duties of our life ; and that we can hope for success in our

endeavours, only by administering kind and gentle advice to our erring brethren in the time of weakness and temptation ; whereas we are unable to do good by branding openly the failings and defects which we see around us. Let us, my dear children, be lenient to the wavering and feeble, lift up the fallen, and extend a helping hand to those who journey on the rugged paths of this world ; for we too stand in need of assistance, of protection, of indulgence. Remember, also, that you will easily guard your tongue from evil, if, in your progress through life, you are anxious to discover great qualities, instead of searching for shortcomings. There is nothing more encouraging, nothing more soul-stirring, than the sight of human goodness. Whenever we strive to hold up noble virtues to general admiration, and earnestly claim respect and reverence for those who exercise them, corresponding qualities may, with the blessing of God, be awakened in ourselves, as well as in others, and developed for our own enjoyment, and for the happiness of all around us.

The Psalmist exclaims : "Guard thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." Guile, my dear children, is one of the worst forms of evil : it is falsehood, fraud, treachery ; and I feel convinced, that none of you would intentionally and knowingly be false and faithless, or would think of lying and deceiving. There is something

revolting and debasing in the very sound of the words; but our faults are cunning enemies; in their craftiness they assume any shape, any colour and semblance, and often misguide us into the belief, that they are, if not virtues, at least necessities. But this is a dangerous delusion. There is, for instance, no departure from truth, however plausible its appearance, and however urgent its motive, that can be excused, or safely indulged in. The flattery which we may practise innocently to please our friends, or designedly, to obtain some object deemed of importance by us, is one species of falsehood. To flatter, is to deceive; and, having contracted the habit of disguising or perverting truth, we no longer shrink from falsehood. Deception, at first involuntary, may lead to intentional fraud, and fraud to treachery, one of the most heinous crimes of which man can be guilty. But it would be too painful for you, my dear children, were I to dwell upon all the sins and calamities with which lying lips, steeped in guile, may afflict us.

It is far more pleasing to consider, that God, in His beneficence, has bestowed upon us the faculty of speech for the noblest and highest purposes. May we ever prize that power, as one of the greatest gifts of His goodness! May our tongue teach the truths we have been permitted to acquire, strengthen the weak and desponding,

comfort and sustain the afflicted with words of hope and faith, and unite all those who come within the circle of our influence, in bonds of love, charity, and devotion. But above all, let our lips, in health and in sickness, in poverty and in wealth, in joy and in sorrow, in early childhood, in buoyant youth, in tottering age, and, indeed, from the brightest to the latest, dimmest years of our existence, breathe thanksgivings to the Lord God Almighty, and pray, that His blessing may guard our lips from evil, and enable us to obey, in truth and faithfulness, His divine laws and precepts.

XI.

“BEAUTY IS VAIN.”

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

The difficulties that would beset the teacher, who attempted constantly to bring new subjects of religious instruction before his hearers, would prove insurmountable ; for the duties of life have, in reality, been the same since the days of our first parents ; and, from the time of our heavenly Father's revelation on Mount Sinai, we are in ardent gratitude bound most faithfully to obey the eternally beautiful commandments of the Lord God Almighty. Those laws are admirable in their simplicity, and admit of only one interpretation ; though embracing the whole circle of our duties, they are few in number, and would not require many hours to be explained, even to the youngest child among you. But the virtues which they inculcate are not always easy to practise ; and it is only by incessantly reminding you of their deep meaning, and of your own strength and ability, by

warning you perpetually against your own weakness, and against the faults leading to evil and to unhappiness, that we can hope to be of service to inexperience minds and youthful hearts.

There are many lessons often repeated to you by zealous masters, and demanding frequent and careful study on your part, before they can dwell in your memory; and yet the knowledge they convey, though very important for your well-being and prosperity, is far less essential than the true appreciation of your duties towards God, and towards your fellow-wanderers on earth. Therefore, my dear children, you will understand the necessity of listening to good advice with unwearied attention, and prove your willingness to do so, by taking to heart the following words of the Book of Proverbs: "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. xxxi. 30).

The deceitful favour here alluded to by King Solomon, implies, no doubt, the admiration and homage called forth, perhaps, by outward personal advantages, and calculated to flatter and delude the young, blinding them to the hollowness of distinctions, which cannot be deemed true blessings. What is called favour, can scarcely be considered otherwise than a boon not earned by personal exertions, and such a privilege has no real value; it is deceitful. Beauty may be

dazzling, but does not warm us like the sun; it may be bright, but does not diffuse cheerfulness all around, like the flame which blazes on the hearth; it may be radiant, but does not dispel darkness like the gloriously illuminating light of truth or of knowledge; it may shine, but does not help us on through dismal hours like the midnight oil which burns in the lamp of the studious, of the hard-working, of the self-denying; it may sparkle like the diamond and ruby from orient mine, but its brilliancy is less lasting than that of gems and jewels. It fades as rapidly as the rose, but, unlike the queen of flowers, leaves nothing behind, save vexation of spirit, and the bitterness of regret.

We are struck by the mountain torrent, foaming over huge stones and fragments of rocks, leaping into deep ravines, and throwing up myriads of gleaming pearls, over which the light of heaven flings its most vivid tints. We are spell-bound by the towering snowy glaciers, glowing “celestial rosy red,” when kissed by the rays of the sinking sun: and nearer home, in our own country, the eye delights in the purple heath of moss and moor, or in the amber furze of the rugged common, in the starry forget-me-not, that blooms near the silvery rill; even in the bryony, which winds so gracefully its emerald foliage and coral beads round every hawthorn hedge or prickly bramble

fence. But who is there among us that would not prefer to all these enchanting beauties of nature, to glistening mountain peaks, to diamond cascades, rushing and gushing into dark precipices, to all the grandeur and poetry of Alpine scenery, to all the brightness of the wild flowers of the earth—who is there that would not, upon reflection, prefer to them the calmly gliding rivers, where the fisherman may spread his nets, the cornfields, waving with golden harvests, free alike from the scarlet poppy and the blue centaurea, those gay but noxious weeds; the wide-extending orchards, luxuriant with the early promise of countless blossoms, or with their rich fulfilment in the shape of heavy clusters of ripening fruit; the green meadows and broad pasture lands, where flocks and herds graze and thrive! Who would not give the palm of superiority to those substantial blessings which contribute to the maintenance, to the prosperity of thousands, nay, of millions of human beings? And so it is with individuals. Beauty surprises, dazzles, fascinates us by mere outward attractions; but truly valuable are only the acquirements and attainments of the mind, the qualities and virtues of the heart, by the faithful exercise of which we are enabled to teach and serve, help and comfort, and, with the blessing of Almighty God, bid happiness smile around us, and thus reap the highest rewards; for

believe me, my dear children, there is no greater satisfaction, there is no purer enjoyment, than to be useful, than to be good.

“Beauty is vain,” says our text: vain, since the possession of it yields no real benefit to ourselves, and does not enable us to contribute, in any way, to the well-being of others; vain, because evanescent; fading rapidly, and leaving nothing behind but annoyance at its disappearance. It is not the sparkling brightness of the eye, my dear children, that makes us clear-sighted, and enables us to survey the wonders of creation; nor the faultless shape of the ear, that allows us to enjoy all the marvellous sounds which pervade the world, the music of air, and earth, and sea, the breeze sighing through leafy branches, the clear tongue of silver bells, the song of lark and nightingale, and, above all, the thrilling voices of our beloved, the joyous laugh of our children, the cordial greeting of our friends, the hymns of our fellow-worshippers. It is not the form of the lips that makes their lessons truthful, that gives force and eloquence to their words, earnestness to their supplications, zeal and ardour to their prayers, or success to their exertions, when they venture on advice or reproof, or when they attempt to soothe and to console, to uphold and to encourage. It is not the graceful proportions of the figure that allow us to bear unharmed the

fatigues of daily labour, nor the snow-white delicacy of the hands that gives us strength to toil, skill to work, to ply the needle, or to guide the pen or pencil. It is not the bright colouring of the cheeks, the luxuriant locks and tresses of the hair, that give us more health, more strength, more aptitude for the duties of life. And knowing that outward charms do not in any way contribute to usefulness, to kindness, to happiness on earth, we should learn to estimate such fleeting possessions at their true value, and to prize the beauty of the mind, of the heart and soul, the beauty of talent, of genius, of justice, and of virtue, far above all corporeal loveliness.

I am afraid, my dear children, that we are apt to overrate good looks and external advantages, and that we attach undue importance to all that heightens outward attractions. We are too fond of glitter, of baubles, and worthless finery. Those who gaudily adorn themselves for the mere gratification of foolish vanity, often grasp at the shadow, while they overlook the substance.

And yet God, who in His beneficence has given you, my dear young friends, the freshness of youth and the roses of health, did not intend that you should neglect such bright advantages. Scrupulous cleanliness ought to be your constant aim; it will do much to brace and strengthen you; it will give a glow to your countenance, a brilliancy to

the smile that parts your lips, a pleasant lightness to your step, to all your movements; and if to cleanliness you add careful simplicity of dress, your appearance will surely make a favourable impression; it will give confidence in your good sense, it will indicate that, while you despise the vanities, you value the graces of life.

Our text says further, “but a woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” My dear children, to fear the Lord, does not mean to tremble before the wrath of the Omnipotent, to dread His might or His ire. Why should we quake before Him, who is the eternal source of all mercy, of all love? As children shrink from offending or grieving their parents on earth, so should we feel awe at the thought of disobeying our heavenly Father’s commandments, of transgressing His divine laws, of neglecting the performance of good deeds. But we will not speak of evil-doers; it is sad to think of them, to dwell on their recklessness. Yet there are sins of omission, severely visited upon us, and I would remind you, my dear children, that the power of woman upon earth is almost unlimited; I mean her power of usefulness. With that knowledge of her strength in her heart of hearts, she should feel encouraged, irresistibly urged on to constant exertions: she may, indeed, be humbled before the greatness of the Lord; she may fear lest she should not be

deemed fully indefatigable and conscientious in the discharge of her duties, lest she should not embrace their whole circle, not be generous and forgiving, benevolent and charitable enough, nor sufficiently watchful, devoted, and self-sacrificing. She may, at times, fear lest she should not fulfil her mission completely, nor always prove a guardian angel to all around her, wisely interposing her protecting wings between the numbing coldness, the raging storms, the fiercely burning passions of the world, and those confided to her loving care; to a mother's or a sister's devotion, to a daughter's veneration, to the sympathy of a noble heart,—of a heart combining the meekness of the dove with the penetration of the serpent and the courage of the lion.

The woman who fears the Lord is keen and clear-sighted, strong and powerful, yet mild and humble-minded, ardent in her faith, and in her adoration of the heavenly hand, which has showered so many blessings upon her, and graciously permitted that she should dispense them to all around.

"She shall be praised," says our text; but do not suppose, my dear children, that by praise is meant the admiration of the public, the flattery of sycophants, the adulation of the world. The applause alluded to, is the earnest approbation of friendship, the radiant smile of delight, the tearful

look of gratitude, the fervent prayer of thankfulness, and the gently rewarding voice of conscience. That is appreciation far more eloquent, far more soul-stirring, than all the honours of the earth. My dear children, let us then, with true and fervent hope, supplicate God for His divine blessing, that we may learn to overcome our weakness, and to remember throughout our pilgrimage, that favour is deceitful, that beauty is vain, but that a woman who fears to disobey the laws of the Almighty, and who faithfully accomplishes her duty, shall be praised for her zealous endeavours, and for the good works of a humbly pious life.

XII.

“LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.”

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

You have often been cautioned against selfishness, and been told of the great evils which it engenders, of the rapid growth of self-worship, and of the tyranny with which such dangerous idolatry usurps the time, the thought, and care, which belong to the service of purer, nobler feelings.

You have heard how soon and how despotically egotism may lead to the utter neglect of great duties, and you have been implored to shun it, as you would beware of the juice of the deadly nightshade, of the venom of the snake, or of the sting of the scorpion ; for does it not corrupt the mind, as those dread enemies poison the life-blood?

And yet selfism is only the abuse of that self-love, which has, by divine Providence, been made inherent in our nature, where its healthy development becomes one of the conditions of our existence. This truth it is impossible to question, if we take the Bible as a torch to our path, and, walking in its brilliant light, see all the obligations which we owe

to our brethren, placed most clearly before us, but always in connexion with our own life. Thus we find in Leviticus: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Let me endeavour to explain to you, my dear children, the meaning of these words. Evidently the love of self must precede that which is due to those around us; otherwise it would not have been taken as a point of comparison. We ought, then, to consider the nature of that feeling, and the manner in which it is usually manifested. Among its first duties, that of self-preservation, in the widest sense of the word, is undoubtedly apparent. The wilful neglect of our health, of our mental and moral development, of our religious training, by which we incalculably injure ourselves, cannot possibly benefit others; on the contrary, such recklessness must wound and afflict most deeply those dearest to our affections, embitter their existence, and cloud, if not annihilate, their happiness. Thus you see, my dear children, that for the sake of our best friends, as well as for our own, we are called upon to devote all our energies to the cultivation of talents and abilities, which the Almighty, in His goodness, has graciously bestowed upon us. How could we prove useful to others without the knowledge which must be diligently acquired, without the experience which can be gained only by active labours among the busy haunts of men, without the strength of mind and

body, which enables us to become valuable citizens of the world, and zealous members of society?

My dear children, the higher we prize the gifts bountifully conferred upon us by the Lord, the more we appreciate such advantages without being vain or proud of them, the more indefatigably we shall endeavour to turn them into engines of utility, first to promote the prosperity of our own immediate circle, and then the improvement and advancement of all our fellow-beings. The more we look upon ourselves as divinely endowed for the fulfilment of a great mission, the more carefully must we watch over our thoughts and words, over our feelings and actions, that none may be vexatious or frivolous, none barren, none productive of evil, but that all be instrumental in achieving real good, in awakening the noblest hopes and aspirations. After the first early years of life, when our education is supposed to be terminated, though in reality it extends throughout the whole period of our existence; when we have emerged, or, as we too often consider, have escaped from the trammels of parental authority, or of scholastic severity: then we begin earnestly to feel, how necessary it is to weigh the duties which we owe to ourselves; for though we may not often be reminded of them by friendly voices, the world speedily punishes our individual failings, as they inevitably lead to offences against its laws and requirements. It is perfectly true, that there is an

intimate connexion between the duties which we are bound to perform towards ourselves, and those demanded of us by others; and that, having neglected the former, we are not well fitted to do justice to the latter. It is equally certain, that great emergencies may arise, when we are, by a sacred call, impelled to save suffering brethren at the risk of our own existence; and history furnishes us with many beautiful instances of noble-minded heroes rushing into burning flames, or plunging into a watery grave to rescue their fellow-beings from danger or death.

But, fortunately, not every one is required to exercise such unusual self-abnegation, or to make such enormous sacrifices. Thanks to divine Providence, shipwrecks, and fires, and the horrors of war, or of pestilence, are not calamities of constant occurrence; and, generally speaking, it is, believe me, my dear children, far better to live truly for others than to die for them, even in a just cause. Indeed, it will be admitted that quite as rare and admirable a spirit of devotion is needed to minister incessantly, and under the most trying circumstances, to the happiness of our fellow-creatures, as to save them from misery or from perdition by one great act of self-sacrifice. As civilisation advances, there are, perhaps, fewer opportunities of achieving sublime deeds of heroism; still in every phase of progress, and

whatever position we occupy in life, we may persevere in the accomplishment of helpful deeds.

Among the duties which we have to fulfil towards ourselves, the care of our health must hold a most prominent place. The state of the mind very often influences the bodily condition, as much as the latter affects the attributes of the soul; but violent pain or sickness unfits us for the energetic discharge of the labours of life, be they intellectual or corporeal; and habitual infirmity of body, though it may not absolutely incapacitate us for every task or exertion, most assuredly weakens and vitiates our powers of usefulness. Besides, illness, even if borne with patience and resignation, surely diminishes the enjoyment of those gifts, which God, in His inexhaustible beneficence, has graciously intended for us all. When laid low by sickness, we cannot always think of others, or hope to benefit them by our advice and assistance; and when overwhelmed by our own sufferings, we want the whole depth and extent of our remaining strength to bear their weight, whereas the entire plenitude of our energies and faculties is demanded, effectually to serve our neighbours. And most truly do the Holy Scriptures teach us, that it is better to be poor and in good health, than rich and afflicted with sore disease; for a vigorous constitution is more valuable than gold, and cheerfulness shines more brightly than pearls.

Although the body is perhaps irreparably injured by excesses, yet it requires food, often more than mere bread to appease hunger, and water to quench thirst ; it craves sleep, rest, recreation : and after the fatigues of the week, all labourers will gladly hail the repose of the Sabbath, and celebrate it in grateful contemplation of the wonders and beauties, with which the Lord has bountifully adorned this world. But rest occupies only a small space in our pilgrimage ; it ranks in importance far below labour, to which we are born. Industry is the condition and the reward of our existence, its salt and spice ; and, even before the fall of man, before sin had darkened the earth, we find our first ancestor appointed to work with the strength and skill of his hands ; for do we not read in Genesis, “ And the Lord God took Adam into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it ? ” And it is certain, my dear children, that by conscientious exertions in the field of life, we may, as it were, still be active in the garden of our heavenly Father, and tend flowers of loveliness and delight.

“ How sweet is the sleep of the toiling man,” says the Preacher ; and many among us must have felt the truth of these words. Another great duty is that of outward cleanliness, which, while it promotes health and strength, should be symbolical of mental purity, of spotless beauty of mind and heart ; for all the obligations imposed upon us by

well-regulated self-love, fall into the back-ground, when compared to the higher duties, which we have to fulfil with regard to the development of our inner faculties, and to the study of the sacred laws, which teach us to accomplish our heaven-appointed mission, and to live in zealous though humble imitation of the Lord in whose image our immortal soul was created. Let us then avoid all evil thoughts, all violent passions; anger, which deprives us of self-control, and leads us headlong into error; avarice, which seals up the fountains of charity, and perverts every generous impulse; envy, which makes us look with a jaundiced eye upon the possessions of others, while it causes us to undervalue our own advantages; pride, which is an egregious folly; for are we not all equally small in the sight of the Eternal, perishable as the flower that blooms and fades, as the tree that may be struck down by one flash of lightning? Let us, above all, beware of selfishness, which is not true love of self, but the guilty over-indulgence of every whim and fancy, of every caprice that may spring from our brain, of every wish and inclination that may rise within us, while it is at the same time utterly regardless of the wishes, feelings, and interests of others. Let us cherish contentment, and learn to prize with a thankful spirit all the mercies and blessings so bountifully lavished upon us by the paternal hand of God.

And, believe me, my dear children, that whatever cares and reverses even the least prosperous among us may experience throughout life, they have fewer trials and afflictions to deplore, than benefits and enjoyments to remember.

Let us, further, beware of frivolity, of attaching undue importance to mere vanities, of underrating that which is truly great and beautiful, or of treating with levity and scorn that which should be viewed with respect and reverence. Let us refrain our lips from evil, from uttering falsehood, from speaking guile, for, “whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.” Let us remain aloof from crooked paths, from wicked companions, as it is almost impossible that the pure-minded should associate with the sinful, and not be contaminated; but let us strive to dwell near the good and righteous, that noble examples of piety and devotion may kindle lofty sentiments in our breast. All ought to study indefatigably according to their capacity; for is not knowledge more precious than rubies? But while we attempt to follow the highest flights of genius, or to dive into the depths and secrets of science, or while we aim at achieving triumphs in art, may we never consider any simple manual labour beneath our dignity, when it can save us and our loved ones from the pressure of poverty, and the humiliation of unnecessary dependence

upon the bounty and exertions of others. Let us not accustom ourselves to an existence of luxury, by which those who plunge into its enervating habits, become incapacitated for the performance of the sterner occupations of life. Let us practise economy and thrift when our own expenses are concerned, that we may be truly charitable and generous when those around us claim help; let us make order and punctuality the rule of our days, that every moment may have its appointed utility, and be deemed an inestimable gem, employed to adorn childhood, youth, and maturer years, with labours and deeds of usefulness.

Such are the duties imposed upon us by true self-love, and corresponding obligations we owe to others, since the Holy Scriptures command us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Of course, we cannot attend to all brethren in need; but to those who come within the sphere of our activity, we should be eager and anxious to extend the advantages conducive to welfare and happiness. We are bidden by numerous passages in the divine Volume, to deal in a kindly spirit with our fellow-beings, and each commandment enjoins some new form and proof of sympathy, and true solicitude. We are bound to exercise the sentiment of universal brotherhood, in thought, word, and deed; in thought, we must maintain our purity by not allowing outward composure and

apparent gentleness of manner and speech, to cloak inward anger or enmity; in short, by never harbouring malice, rancour, or envy, nor meditating deceit and treachery; by never doubting the sincerity and excellence of others, unless we acquire painful conviction of the contrary; by never despising a neighbour, since he is in reality our equal before God; but by looking upon every one as indissolubly connected with us. In words, we should be equally mindful of the duty of love to others, either in speaking of them, or to them. In conversation, we should never allude to our fellow-beings otherwise than kindly, as unguarded expressions may, in travelling from door to door, gather power for evil, become transformed, ere long, into calumnious assertions, tending to overwhelm the innocent with disgrace and affliction, just as a few flakes of snow in rolling down from mountain peaks, collect materials in their descent, and are with fearful rapidity changed into the all-destroying avalanche. In addressing others, we ought to refrain from unreasoning hastiness, irritability, and violence, but speak as we wish to be spoken to, with a benevolent feeling, yet not withholding advice, admonition, or even rebuke; for surely we could not desire our own faults to remain unheeded and uncorrected. With regard to good works, let us strive to do for others, that which we have found productive of happiness to

ourselves ; similar deeds and efforts will increase the prosperity and well-being of our neighbours, will promote their health and comfort, their thrift and frugality ; will teach them to appreciate the dignity of labour, and the excellence of industry ; will enable them to banish prejudice and ignorance, to prize the advantages of knowledge, and the blessings of education.

It may, indeed, my dear children, appear easy enough to recommend the duties of love, but most difficult, if not impossible, to carry out such injunctions. It may seem, that few possess the talent, power, and influence sufficient for so great a task ; but you will soon learn, that this opinion has no foundation ; for even those who do not own great wealth, which permits them to extend their help to thousands, can find means and opportunities of serving others, or share the little they have with those who are still less favoured, and certainly give time, and with it sympathy and attention. If compelled to work all day for their living, may they not, by somewhat curtailing the hours of sleep, find leisure to do much good, to speak, to write, to intercede for others, to instruct them, if necessary, to the best of their abilities ? There is always a wide margin left in life for works of mercy and charity, however closely we imagine our days to be measured. Throughout this country there are innumerable teachers, the sons

and daughters of toil, who deem it a distinction and a blessing that they are allowed to instruct little children how to read the Word of God. Believe me, my dear young friends, that even without incurring the risk of starving, of passing sleepless nights, of exhausting our powers of mind and body, we can accomplish much for the benefit of our neighbours. And however small the place we occupy in the world, however lowly our own condition, if in heart and soul anxious thoughts and warm feelings combine for the welfare of others, there will soon be kindled a bright flame to give us light, and show us, throughout our earthly pilgrimage, the most beneficial manner of distributing the valuable treasures placed in our gift by the grace of the Lord. Then we may have the happiness to know, that in striving to obey the beautiful commandments of the Almighty, we have made the words, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” excellent realities; that we have learnt to carry them into practice, and to cherish all the children of our heavenly Father, whatever their birth and creed, with the whole strength and depth of our love and devotion.

XIII.

“HONOUR THE LORD WITH THY WEALTH.”

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

You have heard of pagans in various parts of the world, of pagans, whom, hitherto, the divine revelation has not reached, and who, in their ignorance, in their mental darkness, bow down before strange idols. Yet, benighted as they are, and mixed up as their worship often is with customs and superstitions from which civilisation and true religion recoil, it cannot be doubted, that these poor untaught beings feel gratitude in their hearts to some powerful Spirit recognised as the bountiful donor of the gifts which they enjoy; and that the idols of wood, or stone, or metal, before which they kneel, are mere symbols of an invisible Benefactor, whom they adore in their own rude fashion. There are innumerable savage tribes of wild, ruthless men, steeped in barbarism; but you will find, that in spite of their aberrations, reverence of an all-powerful Deity is the leading feature of their creed; for the feeling of deep gratitude to an eternal and beneficent Dispenser of all blessings, is innate in the

human breast, implanted there by the divine hand of our heavenly Father. Thus the fire-worshippers, not uncivilised, but still heathens, bend the knee before the sun, which gives them light and warmth by day, which causes their wheat to flourish, their trees to grow, and their fruits to ripen. The invisible Power, which the Parsee reveres as fire on earth, appears to him revealed in the glow and splendour of flames and sunbeams. And if those who are ignorant of the truths of religion, bow down before an unknown Omnipotence, is it not natural that we, my dear children, to whom God's Word was clearly manifested thousands of years ago, should prostrate ourselves in humble thankfulness and ardent adoration before the Almighty Creator?

But this alone cannot satisfy our sense of duty; worship of the Lord should not consist in mere prayers of gratitude and supplication, in mere outward forms and ceremonies. We should adore and praise God, in obedience to His beautiful laws and unchangeable commandments.

My dear children, let us then take to heart, and consider the following precept: “Honour the Lord with thy wealth, and with the first of thy fruits” (Prov. iii. 9). What is it that forms our wealth? in what do our riches consist? Not in pearls or sapphires; God cares not for such treasures: in the sight of the Eternal, truth shines

more brilliantly than the diamond from the Indian mine; knowledge is far above all gems, and the tears of sympathy that spring from the depths of the heart and glisten in looks of love, are more precious than the most beautiful pearls from the caves of the sea. God does not require sparkling jewels or sculptured marble to adorn His Tabernacles. Is not the whole earth His Temple? Are not the mountains that rise heavenward, clothed with living forests, or snow-robed and ice-crowned, are they not columns far grander and far more magnificent than the most costly pillars, carved out of the deep quarries of the land, by the hands of man? And the green earth, enamelled with its countless flowers, those blossoms of sweetness and loveliness, is it not a carpet more splendid than any that could be woven by human skill? Fountains and rivulets, torrents and cascades, and the waves of the sea, and the pinions of the mighty winds, all gushing and sounding through the world, and the voices of myriads of birds, rising into the blue fields of air with unceasing hymns of beauty, are they not music as thrilling and as admirable as that which rang through the vaults of the Temple of Zion, when harps and psalteries filled it, thousands of years ago?

The words, "Honour the Lord with thy wealth," are directed alike to rich and poor; yet God does not want the superfluities of the wealthy, nor the

scanty savings of the needy. Is not the universe, with all its wonders and glories, His own? Those words must therefore mean, that noble and generous use should be made of the gifts and advantages in our possession; that, in accordance with the divine spirit, which pervades our holy religion, the rich should assist those who may require help, that they should offer food to the hungry, clothing to the naked; that they should give fuel, shelter, and light, not merely the roof that wards off rain and snow, but also the protection that guards against the nipping chill and numbing indifference of the world; not only the faggots or coals that blaze on the hearth, and warm the frozen or shivering limbs, but also the tender sympathy and true solicitude that make the coldest heart glow, and kindle the best feelings of human nature; not merely bread for the body, but also food for the mind; not only light for the eyes, but also illuminating truth for the soul, which is, alas! so often darkened by surrounding shadows.

Those destitute, or nearly so, of the possessions called earthly treasures, are yet enjoined to honour the Lord with their wealth. But they have no gold or silver which they can transmute into kindness; none, however, are too poor to give. There is always something which may be divided with those still more needy than ourselves; and if

there be no tangible goods to place at the disposal of our suffering brethren, we can offer our help to lessen the weight of their anxieties, we can labour for them, give them our watchful care in times of trouble and of sickness, devote to them our earnest attention, that they be encouraged to seek us hopefully, and confide to us their difficulties and apprehensions, which we then may strive to lessen by gentle sympathy and fervid zeal. It is a blessed thing to give, and to feel, that whatever is valuable and enjoyable, that whatever has been graciously bestowed upon us by the mercy of divine Providence, may be shared with others. It is delightful to know, that, with the blessing of Almighty God, we may always do some good on earth, that we may always hope to help and support, console, comfort, and cheer those in distress or affliction. Indeed our own happiness would be dimmed by the sight of surrounding misery, if we did not believe it possible to bid smiles of contentment replace tears of sorrow, if we did not feel it to be a great and noble privilege to make others participate in our possessions. It is true, that we cannot give eyes to the blind, activity to the lame, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb; but we can mitigate all evils by the power of faithful love. "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord," and in that way we are permitted to honour God with our wealth.

We are bidden to honour Him also with the first of our fruits. When the holy Temple stood on Mount Moriah, the Israelites, our forefathers, were commanded to lay on the altar, the fig, the olive, and the gleaming clusters of the vine, pomegranates and honey, and the yellow sheaves of the harvest: — the olive, that time-honoured emblem of peace; the fig, the fruit borne by the patriarchal tree; the grape, with its refreshing or invigorating juices; the countless rubies of the pomegranate; the sweetness distilled by the bee; and the choicest ears of corn, forming the staff of life, and affording nourishment and strength to all God's children.

But the Temple has long ceased to exist, and sacrifices, according to the literal meaning of the expression, are no longer offered; yet in the nobler and deeper sense of the word, the same laws will endure till the end of time. To sacrifice is to relinquish some precious treasure, to surrender it entirely, without reserve; and surely, my dear young friends, there are none among us who may not be called upon in the course of their existence to yield up, for the benefit of others, that which they prize, perhaps most highly, themselves. Our text says: “Honour the Lord with the first of thy fruits.” The first fruits in an orchard are the freshest, the most delicate, those borne by the tree in its vigour, ere the parent stem, the

supporting branch, is impaired by any symptom of weakness or decay, or before the sun has lost its mellowing powers, before the autumnal winds have travelled over the land, and chilled the bloom on downy peach or purple plum. In a similar manner, the first fruits of the heart are our best efforts, our warmest feelings, our highest aspirations, our most glowing zeal, our most fervid devotion, ere time, with its maiming scythe, has swept over them, ere affliction and sickness, ere the disappointments and vicissitudes of life have disabled us, have crippled our energies, have bereft us of the ability of doing good, and left us nought but the sting of useless regrets. To honour the Lord with the first of our fruits, is to sacrifice, in obedience to His divine commandments, and for some great or excellent purpose, that which we value most truly; and, by doing so, in all humility, without a murmur, though not always without a pang, for that would perhaps be impossible to frail humanity, we reap blessings of which the selfish can have no idea.

To relinquish a real benefit, does not make what is truly precious of less importance to us; on the contrary, the sacrifice enhances our appreciation of the advantage, which we have surrendered, and teaches us to prize it doubly. If urged by the voice of pity to give up our bread to a sick or starving fellow-creature, and to leave the

cravings of our own hunger unappeased, we are rewarded, not merely by the tranquillising consciousness of having saved a distressed brother or sister from suffering ; but the bread we have shared with others acquires a value in our eyes, which it never had before. Often we may have been inclined to wish for more sumptuous fare, but after the sacrifice, we shall relish our daily bread, and gratefully acknowledge the beneficence of the Lord, who vouchsafed it to our wants. And so it is with all our possessions ; we shall no longer covet silken or velvet garments, and cast a look of dissatisfaction upon the homely attire in which we appear among others, after having parted, perhaps, with our best wearing apparel to guard some shivering fellow-wanderer from cold ; but then we shall be deeply thankful for the covering which protects our limbs. Leisure to follow some pleasant pursuit, rest after the labours of the day, sleep to renew our energies for the morrow, and time devoted to business or to study, are all advantages and blessings, which we learn to value, after having been called upon to sacrifice them at the shrine of duty. And when that duty ceases, we enjoy, with renewed zest and eagerness, the leisure that allows us healthy recreation, the precious time for study, and we are doubly thankful for the hours of rest and for the nights of sleep, that increase our strength, and renovate our powers.

But when we have courage enough to resign those airy nothings, to which we too often cling with delight, when we forego the gratification of mere vanity or the enjoyment of frivolous amusements, which do not enhance our real happiness, or tend to improve and elevate the mind; then we soon discover, how contemptible those long cherished idols were, and how well, nay, how much better we can live without them.

My dear children, let us honour the Almighty with our wealth, with the first of our fruits, with our best treasures of heart, and mind, and soul; with all the powers and energies which He has graciously bestowed upon us; with our activity and zeal in the performance of duty, ere the blight of adverse circumstances warp our faculties, ere the frost of old age bind us with its fetters. And if we have honoured the Lord, if we have served Him in truth, in earnestness, and in humility, if we have gladly sacrificed our first fruits to Him, and given them cheerfully, generously, with feelings of charity and devotion, to our brethren on earth; then we may confidently look for a second life and youth beyond the grave, for eternal life, for unfading youth, for undimmed sunshine, for undying flowers, for fruits which storms cannot nip in the bud, and whose bloom and beauty autumnal winds can never chill.

XIV.

ON CHILDHOOD.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS.

The dangers of conceit and of vanity, the sinfulness of haughty looks, expressive of haughty thoughts and feelings, have, no doubt, been frequently pointed out to you; but it seems scarcely possible to repeat too often, how reprehensibly you would act by attaching undue importance to any advantages which may have fallen to your lot, such as innate or acquired quickness, or natural cleverness, highly developed by the power of favorable circumstances, or by your own care and perseverance. Still less justifiable would be any presumptuous bearing in consequence of a worldly position superior to, or more prosperous than that of the playmates and fellow-learners by whom you are surrounded. Your clothes may be better than theirs, your home replete with comforts, which to many of the young pupils scanning the same lessons as yourselves, are perfectly unknown; yet it would be unpardonable to treat them contemptuously, or merely to be supercilious and

overbearing towards them, because their parents have, perhaps, to carry on a hard struggle for the necessaries of life. The vanity called forth by the possession of personal endowments, the conceit engendered by dazzling talents, and the arrogance produced by eminence of station, deserve, alike, unmitigated blame. But there is one feeling of noble pride, which ought to be developed to its utmost extent. May that sentiment be stimulated in you by the following words from the Book of Proverbs: "Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children are their fathers."

My dear young friends, you know that the crown of a forest tree is formed by its highest branches, by the most leafy, the most flourishing, the most beautiful, those nearest to the sky, to the sun, to the reviving dews, to the balmy breezes, to the fertilising showers, to the radiant light of heaven. They grow where the air is purest, where the rays of the celestial orb are not intercepted; they thrive where clinging ivy does not impede health and strength; they expand in the brightest atmosphere, where birds love to dwell, and to sing their joyous carols. And the crown of a rose-tree is its summit, decked with the sweetest blossoms, where richly-jewelled butterflies revel among buds and flowers, where the bee gathers her honeyed treasures, where the voice

of the nightingale is most melodious. And in southern climes, where nature seems more lavish of her bounties than in our own temperate zone, the crown of the queen of fruits, of the regal pineapple, is the promise of future excellence.

And among men, the crown of kings is the outward sign, the symbol of power, the emblem of authority over great empires and over the destinies of mighty nations. The crown of laurel, that wreathes the brow of the illustrious, far more precious than the glittering diadems which encircle anointed heads, becomes towards the mid-day or evening of a glorious career, the reward of genius that has shone, and wrought, and laboured, perhaps suffered, for humanity. It may bloom late, it may rest only on the grave, and be clasped round the memory of the sublime poet, of the devoted statesman, of the self-sacrificing patriot, of the hero who gave his treasures of blood and life, of the philosopher who gave his whole wealth of thought to his contemporaries and to posterity; but, believe me, my dear children, the crown of honour is never withheld from the truly great, and good, and noble.

My dear young friends, do you understand, how children's children may become the crown of old men? They are the highest branches of the time-honoured tree; let them feel pride in that distinction. They are further removed from the

denser atmosphere, from the shadows of earth, than the aged stem; they rejoice in light and sunshine, they drink in the refreshing dews of heaven, they hear the beauteous concerts of aerial choristers singing their morning hymns or evening psalms to Almighty God. They have youth and health and growing strength; their existence is one of brightness; the clouds of by-gone sufferings and losses do not cast their darkness around them; the gloom of cares and anxieties does not obscure their life. The tears of childhood are not those burning drops, which never flow without leaving furrows behind; they are more like April showers, speedily followed by those flowers of happiness, the most beaming smiles. My dear children, learn to prize your sunny youth, your blooming health, your buoyant strength, the unalloyed hopes that fill your mind, the light-winged joys that pervade your heart. Possessed of treasures exceeding in value all gems of the sea, all gold of the earth, you should, indeed, become a crown of delight to your parents. You should work unremittingly with head and heart and limbs. You can do so; your mind is clear; it is undimmed by fears and apprehensions for the distant future, or for the impending morrow; it is unfettered by pressing necessities; your ardour is undamped by failures; your courage is unchecked by reverses. You can labour with all your heart; for that young heart

knows not yet the sadness of woe, the bitterness of regret and self-reproach, the cold weight of disappointment; wounding unkindness and lacerating harshness have not caused it to bleed. Nor is your bodily vigour wasted and enfeebled by long years of hard toil; sickness and suffering have not weakened your arms and made your hands tremble. And as the birds of the air love the highest and freshest branches, as the bees seek the sweetest blossoms, so not merely the active and cheerful, but all mankind are irresistibly attracted towards childhood, the harbinger of future worth, and the rewarding crown of present generations. Many who, in their anxious desire to benefit the needy, frequently turn away, with a sigh of hopelessness, from those whom they may find it impossible to serve, whom they cannot raise from the depths of misery to the heights of well-being, whom they are unable to lead forth from the darkness of ignorance, or from the still greater gloom and dangers of vice, into the bright paths of knowledge and virtue, many of these philanthropists feel hopefully drawn towards childhood. They give unto it their utmost care and attention, their deepest thought, their most earnest exertions; for they know, that children may, indeed, with the blessing of God, realise the fondest wishes and most enthusiastic anticipations formed for their advancement and happiness. The whole world

lies before them. Aided by the experience and endeavours of zealous guides, they may become that which adverse circumstances, uncontrollable events, imperfect means of education, prevented those who lived before them from being. All eyes have kind looks, all lips have gentle words for childhood; all hearts warm towards it. My dear young friends, do not disregard these great advantages. Think, that you may become a crown to the old, to the weary, and be unto them the strength and power which they have lost. Learn to understand and to prize the noble duties which you are called upon to fulfil. Remember, how much is expected from you, how much you may, with divine assistance, be able to give, how much joy you can diffuse around you. Remember, that if you thus transform the ardent hopes of your friends into beautiful realities, you will cause your parents to pass, as it were, through their own life a second time, without the exhausting strife of their earlier years, and without any alloy of selfishness. Your own vigour will replace their impaired health, their diminished energy; your prosperity and happiness will be theirs; your love, no longer barren, and expressed only by affectionate words, will prove rich in good works, will indeed be a crown, a reward, to those whom it is your duty and your delight to cherish and to revere.

The second part of our text says, "the glory of

children are their fathers." My dear young friends, let us ever recollect and acknowledge, how much we owe to our parents; let us strive with all the powers of mind and soul graciously implanted in us by the Lord God Almighty, always to shape our conduct so that it shall be an honour to our children: and then our deeds will constitute their best inheritance; then our loved ones will look back to the trials to which we submitted without flinching, to the disappointments borne by us without a murmur, to the sacrifices we made without boasting, to the perhaps unrequited proofs of devotion which we never ceased to give to all around us, to the bodily pain we endured with resignation, to the affliction which God's mercy allowed us to suffer with fortitude; and then our whole life will be unto our children a torch to light their path, so that they may avoid dangers and surmount obstacles, feel sustained in hours of weakness, comforted in times of sorrow, and encouraged in seasons of difficulty. Indeed, the humble though anxious endeavours of parents may win glory for their children: yes, glory—we find the word in the holy text, and, in truth, the reality comes from the great Dispenser of all blessings. For what are human aims, even the most lofty, human efforts and exertions, even the most strenuous, human actions, even the best and most self-sacrificing? They are mere specks on the wings of

time, mere grains of sand in the immensity of the universe. Glory comes from God: it is a gift of His boundless goodness, like health, and life, and love, and happiness. It is the crown which His inexhaustible beneficence awards to those who, during their earthly journey, have ever tried to obey His beautiful laws, and keep His sacred commandments.

XV.

ON OLD AGE.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS.

You are standing on the threshold of your career; and it is the privilege of happy childhood, unfettered, gay, and blithe, as the birds of the air, to possess a keen sense of enjoyment, to lead a cheerful life, one of ever-varying sensations and of quick emotions, rather than of deep thought and of profound feeling. You have no fears; the day is bright, you think not of the morrow; or it may be dull, and dark, and cold, but you heed not the outward gloom; all is light, and warmth, and brightness within the circle of your merry games. You have neither cares nor anxieties; these are the offspring of heavy responsibilities, which the goodness of the Almighty has withheld from your young years. Mental sufferings are almost unknown to you, and bodily pain, when not associated with anguish of the mind, is more easily borne. Childhood achieves a rapid triumph over sickness, and indeed over all woes, ills, and evils, which are the heirlooms of humanity. Our heavenly Father has willed it so in His beneficence;

otherwise children could not rest in their cradles, nor eat their daily bread ; they would not grow and thrive ; the development of their limbs, the expansion of their brain, could not take place.

It is natural, that they should not be absorbed by anxious thoughts ; but their memory being unburdened by the recollection of past trials, their mind, free from harrowing apprehensions for the future, retains the lessons confided to it at a tender age. Those lessons are not obliterated ; on the contrary, they take root in the heart, and, like grain dropped into the earth, they yield, with the blessing of Almighty God, rich and beauteous harvests. Therefore, loving parents and zealous advisers, watch carefully over young children, teach them diligently, impart to them those invaluable precepts which should never be forgotten ; impress upon them the fulfilment of their duties, of those duties which grow every year in importance, as well as in number. Among them, the respect due by the young to the aged, is powerfully enjoined in the following words of Holy Scripture, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God ; I am the Eternal" (Lev. xix. 32).

My dear children, the Almighty has placed within our breast two feelings which may well co-exist without being prejudicial to each other, namely, the love of novelty, and the attachment

which binds men to all that once pleased or charmed them. Though the love of novelty acts as a potent spell over our imagination, though it awakens fresh thoughts and aims, and is one of the chief incentives to exertion and progress, though it kindles and fans the spirit of enterprise and of adventure ; yet it is probable, that the force of habit, the feeling with which we cling to the past and its traditions, exercises a still greater influence over multitudes and individuals. We cleave to old customs and forms ; we study the languages that flourished in by-gone ages, the literature and annals of distant epochs and ancient nations ; we revert to time-honoured rules to guide and instruct us, and, of course, we humbly strive to act in accordance with the divine precepts promulgated more than three thousand years ago ; those beautiful laws, however, are endued with eternal life ; they were vouchsafed unto all generations, they retain their sway through all centuries. And, passing to objects of less magnitude and of minor attraction, it is a matter of general observation, that few persons feel allured by new towns, so cold and so bare, with their long wide streets, their broad squares and places, unconnected with the history of preceding times ; while eager crowds will hasten to visit old buildings, to admire old cities, to worship in old temples, to meditate near old ruins, to read beneath old trees, to seek great and good counsel

among the relics, vestiges, and symbols, of the past; to derive antiquarian and historical lore from old pictures and books, so replete with useful examples. And not only do the achievements of man during past centuries challenge our enthusiastic admiration, or excite our fervid interest; but among the wondrous works of creation, those that date from times immemorial, appear to wield a far greater power over our minds, than the ever renewed gifts and blessings of God. The song of birds, the sweetness of flowers, the ripening fruit, the abundant harvests reaped by indefatigable hands, do not rivet our thoughts so forcibly as the calm lake with its crystal depths, as the foaming cascade, flinging through endless cycles of time, into the dark abyss beneath, its wealth of diamonds and pearls, and its myriads of sun-lit rainbows; as the wide fathomless ocean, over which millions of ships career to seek prosperity, and perhaps to find destruction; as the celestial orbs, whose radiance has shone over so many hopes and fears, so many lives and deaths.

And yet there is no edifice, there is no city, there is nothing in nature, however grand and majestic, so deeply interesting and venerable as the hoary head which enshrines the human mind; there is no picture that appeals so irresistibly to the imagination, as the furrowed brow of the old man, whom we are commanded to honour. Even

the towering mountains, the dazzling glaciers, the starry worlds and all their glories, appear insignificant when compared with man, whom God has created in His own image. But the Almighty is not corporeal, and our senses cannot conceive His ineffable greatness. It is our immortal soul that bears resemblance to the Creator, and our perishable body is but the frail vessel which holds it.

How incontrovertibly does old age show us, what the brightest youth must become, if not nipped in the bud, or cut off in the flower. Does it not hold out indelible lessons, convey irrefutable truths concerning the vanities of life? Who can notice the tottering gait, the enfeebled limbs, the impaired sight, the imperfect hearing, the scarcely audible speech of the aged, and contrast them with the buoyant, almost flying steps, the clear eye, the quick ear, the ringing voice of childhood and youth, without seeing at once the evanescent nature of those beauteous advantages, which we are apt to value, not too highly perhaps, yet exclusively, forgetting that God Almighty, in His beneficence, has bestowed upon us more lasting gifts, which, if duly prized and used, will bless us during the whole of our earthly existence. Old age brings before us the picture of our pilgrimage, with its innumerable changes and vicissitudes, with its trials, sufferings, sorrows, and bereavements. Let us respect and revere the hoary head,

as we should honour a valued teacher who could hold up for our instruction a mirror prophetically showing the probable temptations and dangers of our life, an experienced friend, who could advise and warn us quietly and gently, yet firmly and forcibly.

My dear children, let us endeavour correctly to understand, what is meant by honouring old age. It is not to overwhelm the aged with protestations and outward forms of respect and reverence; the Lord, in His goodness, frequently permits years to roll by so calmly, and men to grow old so gradually, so imperceptibly to themselves, that they do not like to be reminded too often of the great difference between their failing powers, and the increasing energies of youth. To honour the aged is to strive with all means at our disposal, to do that which would prove most agreeable and most useful to them; to honour the aged, is to yield to their service the activity of our hands, the vigour of our health, the faithfulness of our memory, our talents, if Providence should have blessed us with any, our patience, our devotion, if they be needed. My dear children, how melancholy is the thought, that in our latest years we may perhaps be abandoned, left alone in our debility and helplessness, when afflicted with numerous infirmities, which, bringing us nearer to death, lead us, it is true, to the gates of immortality. But notwithstanding that belief,

that sublime consolation of religion, our powers of endurance are often sorely tried ; for, being weak and human, we feel oppressed by the weight of suffering, and then we anxiously and constantly yearn after proofs of gentle sympathy and love.

Our text says, lastly, “ And fear thy God ; I am the Eternal.” In such emphatic terms does the Almighty ordain, that we shall honour the hoary head ; He declares disrespect to the aged to be almost a profanation of His own holiness. But the Lord is the inexhaustible fountain of all mercy, of all blessings. We cannot tremble before Him, nor dread His anger ; what we must fear, is to disobey His admirable commandments ; and if we thus live in reverential awe of our heavenly Father, and aloof from wrong-doing, then we may bow down before Him hopefully and in humble adoration, while we feel, that the shadows of our own old age, will be only similar to the darkest hours of night, which precede the dawn of a new morning.

XVI.

THE HAPPINESS OF CONCORD.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

You have often been exhorted to exercise gentleness and patience, kindness and forgiveness, to bear disappointments, if possible, without a frown, to endure annoyances with meekness, to banish all feelings of resentment, to curb all emotions of anger, and check all expressions of irritation. You will prove more loveable, by learning to control passionate excitement, and to soften the asperities of your temper. You will be more pleasing to others, and become more trustworthy friends; you will teach by precept and example, and be infinitely happier, because more cheerful and less ruffled by each passing gale; and being happier, you will also feel able to do more good to those who need advice and assistance. Habitual irascibility is incompatible with buoyant spirits and bright hopes, which, if not fettered, will always be powerful auxiliaries to your best feelings, to your most strenuous endeavours for the advantage of others. Young girls living at home, surrounded by their loved ones, will find it a

comparatively easy task to practise forbearance ; it is not difficult to extend indulgence to those who cling to us with tender affection, or to whom we belong by the most endearing ties. Attachment, duty, devotion, prompt us to forgive, and to repress the murmur, the sigh that may rise to our lips, or the unbidden tear that may obscure our eyes. But it is more difficult to yield to strangers ; for we understand their motives and feelings less truly, we have fewer sympathies in common with them, and are not so much inclined to make allowances for their faults and shortcomings. At home, even children may, by their smiles, their joyous voices, and all their playful ways, increase the general harmony. And remember, that the earlier we begin to train ourselves for the active performance of the duties of life, the more perfectly we may hope to fulfil them, and the easier we shall find it, not merely to vanquish our faults, but also to use the most energetic efforts for our own satisfaction as well as for the enjoyment and happiness of all those who depend upon our labours.

Let us then, my dear children, take to heart the precious lessons contained in the following words : “ Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity ” (Ps. cxxxiii. 1). It is impossible to live in concord with all those who form our circle, without knowing their hopes and aims, and also their anxieties and afflictions. But

to know those feelings is to share them by tender and genuine sympathy, is to endeavour by the force of will and devotion to lighten the weight of sorrow ; is to strive by untiring, helpful zeal, to contribute to the fulfilment of fondly cherished anticipations and ardent wishes ; is to foster and encourage lofty aspirations. And if we live thus lovingly for others, entering with all the energies of our mind into their sphere of thought and care, taking true, active interest in their pursuits and in their welfare, then the glittering vanities and alluring frivolities of life will soon sink into their real insignificance ; then selfism, which strangles in its tight embrace the best impulses of our nature, cannot grow and expand, but is quickly and completely uprooted ; and what remains of self in the depths of the soul, and in the recesses of the mind, is self-knowledge. For, believe me, my dear children, it is impossible for us to think or to toil much with heart and brain, without learning our own powers of usefulness, and also our own weakness : and self-knowledge gradually enables us to avoid our errors, to develop our higher qualities, and thus to win self-respect. Few will know their own defects and abilities, without striving to correct the former, and to cultivate the latter to their utmost limits.

While actively occupied in promoting the advancement and welfare of others, the trifling

annoyances or disappointments which mark with dark lines the flight of time, and would, under different circumstances, disturb our equanimity, lose their importance, exist unheeded, or vanish completely. How can it be otherwise, when matters of real magnitude engross our thoughts? Even the minor cares of life do not press so heavily upon us, when we have made the needs, the sorrows, and enjoyments of our friends and neighbours, of all our brethren, the paramount objects of our attention and solicitude. The deep and conscientious study of human nature, when pursued to discover the wants of the suffering and to relieve them, to ascertain the cravings of the helpless and to satisfy them, to understand the grief of the afflicted and to assuage it, teaches real philosophy, reverential wisdom. There are comparisons which force themselves upon us; there are bright examples which strike our imagination and inspire us with courage and fortitude. Even our own great trials are more easily borne while we have energy left to exert ourselves for others. There are, however, infirmities so great, afflictions so overwhelming, there is bodily pain so acute, there is debility so paralyzing, that the faculty of exertion ceases, and activity becomes impossible: and then, hope in God's inexhaustible mercy, and fervent supplication to the throne of grace, seem the only two blessings left to comfort us. Yet,

my dear children, a third consolation remains ; it is the consciousness of having laboured zealously, of having ardently and indefatigably endeavoured to do our duty. That feeling, that tranquillizing conviction, drops balm into all bleeding wounds ; it robs corporeal tortures of their horrors, it robs mental affliction of its greater agony. Reflect, how terrible it would be, my dear children, in the time of trial, and while enduring, perhaps, excruciating pain, to feel, that our days have been mis-spent, and that we have deserved the punishment which may overpower us.

In some instances, you may not find it easy to dwell in unity with those near you ; but earnestness of purpose will teach you, ere long, to overcome all difficulties. Soon you will be certain to reap, and to make others enjoy, the fruits of your forbearance. In order to live in concord with all those who cluster around our home, or who form the perhaps ever-extending circle in which divine Providence has placed our labours, we must begin by correcting our infirmities of disposition. Such faults may appear but trifling, likely to affect merely our own existence, and to leave unimpaired the fulfilment of those higher duties of life, which we owe to our fellow-creatures. This, however, is not the case. No faults can be called unimportant, as unfortunately none remain so ; they all grow and increase, and as they accompany us

in our intercourse with others, it is impossible that they should not exercise some injurious influence. In our state of society, we may do harm to our friends and neighbours, either by actual interference in their concerns, which cannot always be avoided, or by the force of pernicious example.

Let us, my dear children, enjoy every happy hour with buoyant gratitude, and refrain from murmurs and frowns when the serenity of our horizon becomes overcast. Sullen discontent, habits of ill-humour, appear like those dense mists which extinguish the light, and intercept the warmth of sunshine. Many may be truly benevolent ; but while they are steeped in sombre dissatisfaction, kindly thoughts will scarcely occur to their minds, or gentle expressions of sympathy flow from their lips. Or if the gloom of their wayward temper should occasionally be pierced by their innate goodness of feeling, a genial warmth will still be missed, and their intended kindness will seem cold, like the sun struggling through dark fogs. Although persons afflicted with a morose disposition may perhaps be respected for certain valuable qualities, which occasionally co-exist with great infirmities of character, they cannot be sincerely and deeply beloved ; their powers of aiding others will be curtailed, their presence will be shunned. Not meeting with the sparkling

look of joy, and with the tearful glance of gratitude, which so often reward those who have been fortunate enough to help or serve their brethren, the moody benefactors will feel chilled ; the ardour of their devotion will find itself quenched ; and having lost or relinquished the external amenities or graces of life, they will frequently run the risk of losing the greater, more precious treasures of the heart, and of becoming, in reality, indifferent and callous. By giving way to the influence of ill-humour, we allow a blight to fall upon our better nature ; we stifle our own benevolence, we deprive ourselves of much happiness and enjoyment.

But what shall we say of those who do not keep in check passion and violence ? My dear children, I hope you will ever retain in faithful and vivid recollection, that “ a soft answer turneth away wrath,” but that “ grievous words stir up anger.” We do not sufficiently appreciate the sway exercised by human language. It is one of the great blessings beneficently bestowed upon us by Almighty God ; it is one of those invaluable privileges which we enjoy above all other beings, above the mightiest tenants of earth, sea, and air ; it is one of those powers which enable us to vanquish, or to make subservient to our will, the fiercest animals, whose strength could easily destroy us. And if we wield so much force over dumb creatures, how much greater should be our authority over our

own brethren, endowed with the same faculties as ourselves ?

You have been told, my dear children, but cannot be too frequently reminded, that the voice of man, obeying the dictates of reason and of judgment, of sympathy and of benevolence, is far better able to teach and advise, to reprove or console, to cheer and encourage, than any other faculty graciously bestowed upon us. Kind words will repress wrath, as the softest breath of air extinguishes the light of a candle ; while grievous speech, like a stormy wind, may fan a spark into consuming flames and destructive fires. Let us recollect also, my dear children, that “ hatred stirreth up strife, but that love covereth all offences.” The anger kindled by irritating or afflicting expressions, often deepens into hatred, which inevitably leads to unhappiness. It is far easier not to offend others, than to be cordially forgiven by them ; it is less difficult to avoid receiving provocation or insult, than to extend unconditional pardon to those who have hurt or wounded us. We may show indulgence and mercy ; but distrust of the offender frequently and involuntarily lingers in our mind. Habitual gentleness on our part will make it improbable, if not impossible, that others should affront us ; it will be a more efficient safeguard than harshness of manner or of speech.

Lastly, let me tell you, my dear children, that it is most painful to contemplate the frequent results of irritation, vindictiveness, and violence of temper. Deep injuries may be inflicted by those who allow anger to overcome their reason. Sin has been incurred, crime perpetrated, life even sacrificed in moments of exasperation, manslaughter has been committed, overwhelming the guilty with undying remorse. Thus hatred leads to strife, to incalculable, to unmitigated evils, while love covereth all offences. If your heart be pervaded by kindly feelings, if it be full of warm sympathy, of tender solicitude for every one, my dear children, you will forgive easily; you cannot do otherwise, when the first sorrowful surprise is past. It will alleviate your pain to pardon the offenders, and your leniency, far from crushing those who unwittingly or knowingly have injured or wronged you, may turn all their gall into sweetness, and cause them to repent in their heart of hearts. It will certainly make them respect, perhaps even love you; and that is surely a great triumph, for you have often heard, that the erring and sinful, who have harmed others, unable to forgive themselves, and ever reminded of their fault by remorseful feelings, shun those whom they have hurt, and thus become strengthened in their enmity.

Remember, my dear children, that by the side of true, self-denying love, of entire devotedness,

there is no room for evil sentiments. And, doubtless, it is not only good, but pleasant also, for us to dwell together in unity. Most misfortunes arise from the want of concord; much of the suffering in this world is the result of anger and hatred, of strife and malice, of envy, and uncharitableness, and of the absence of that blessed feeling which covereth all offences. Loss of fortune, infirmities and sickness, are sent by God Almighty to try and chasten us; and death is a dark shadow extending between this world and that better land promised to the just and righteous. But nearly all other troubles are man's own making, caused by grievous words, unjustifiable excitement, or blind passion. My dear children, let us beseech God to strengthen our best endeavours towards the establishment of peace around us, and to bless us with His divine support, so that we may hope to live happily in uninterrupted concord and undisturbed harmony with all those who accompany us throughout our pilgrimage on earth.

XVII.

ON FORBEARANCE.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

Although the most highly favoured of mankind may labour indefatigably and successfully to acquire learning, to make the lore and science of by-gone ages their own; although many are endowed with brilliant intellectual faculties, with powers of mind which, measured by our human standard, may appear great and rare, yet even their knowledge is so narrow and so circumscribed, their judgment so imperfect, so fallible, the means at their disposal are so limited, their insight into men and things is so far from penetrating to the depths of truth, that surely every-one, in forming opinions of others, of their motives and actions, should, from fear of committing an injustice, either openly or in the recesses of the heart, be urged to take a lenient view of all blemishes and imperfections. We should remember, that the faults and failings which most painfully strike and offend our innate sense, our most dearly cherished convictions of that which is right and honest, good and true and pure, that all those shortcomings or positive wrongs may be owing to imperfect or entirely neglected

training, to the apathy produced by impaired health, to the absence of staunch principles, never inculcated into the mind or heart, to the fatal presence of evil example, to dangers we know not, to temptations we see not, to inward or outward perils, of which the most discerning and the most vigilant may have no idea.

My dear children, indulgence, and not severity, is, I think, the first impulse of our nature. Let us fortify ourselves in the best intentions, which may not always be sufficiently powerful to produce the best actions, by the perusal of the following words: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart'" (Zechar. vii. 9, 10). My dear children, it is the Lord who speaketh thus, the Lord of heaven and earth, of all nations, of all worlds, of all eternity; the Lord of all productions, of all creatures, of all generations. He whose divine will calls us into life, and closes our eyes in death; "He who bringeth low, and lifteth up;" "He who upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that are bowed down;" it is He who commandeth us to execute true judgment.

What is the real import of these words, my dear children? The holy text says, mercy and

compassion. Rigour, cold severity, and harshness, are but injustice. Some may perhaps suppose, that they will never have any opportunity of exercising true judgment; but let no one, whatever his position in the world, indulge in such thoughts. To form opinions of others, and to act in accordance with those opinions, is expected from beings, whom God has created after His own likeness, and graciously intended to wield dominion over the whole earth. And you, also, believe me, my dear children, will be called upon to execute judgment in the course of your existence. Do not imagine, that your condition is too humble to demand the exercise of gentle forbearance, of tender mercy, and of deep compassion. It is true that you do not stand above and beyond others, that we are all placed by the side of our fellow-beings, and can never think too little of ourselves, but should always and anxiously strive to banish pride from our thoughts and feelings, from our actions, words, and even looks; yet we can never entertain too vivid a sense of our duties, we can never place them too high in our estimation, nor invest them with too lofty, with too sacred a character. The conscientious fulfilment of our obligations makes us both happier and better. It raises us above the annoyance caused by the minor disappointments of the day, and purifies our minds and hearts from the mists, from the shadows of selfishness.

My dear children, the more you advance towards womanhood, the more your duties will extend, the more numerous, the more arduous, will they become. Prepare yourselves in childhood for the performance of your task in later years. It is never too early to begin ; and the opportunities of showing indulgence and sympathy will never fail you.

Commence by being kind, gentle, and patient at home, with your elder brothers and sisters, who, already obliged to toil, and perhaps overburdened with work, may require the services of your hands to lighten the weight of their load. Be more patient, be kinder and gentler still with the younger ones, who cling around you in their helplessness. They possibly want much quieting and soothing, when you, too, are weary and stand in need of rest, or when you long for leisure and tranquillity to study and to learn. The poor little children are perhaps hungry or restless, feverish and ill at ease. Your mother is probably working with indefatigable industry, and unable to give them the care and attention which they crave. You may find their cries, their clamouring, irksome and fatiguing at times, but you will dry their tears ; and later, the fond affection of brothers and sisters will more than compensate you, my dear young friends, for all you have endured, for all you have relinquished.

It is not unlikely, that your elder sisters have been sent, quite young, into service ; and that necessity has driven your brothers into the streets, there to earn a precarious subsistence. At night, the youths come home, after the rough contact with those who crowd the noisy market-place or the busy thoroughfare ; and the maidens return to their own hearth, after having borne the harshness of perhaps severe task-mistresses : there may be much in their words and looks, in their manners, in their habits, so very different from what you have seen under the roof of your parents, that you are often called upon to execute true judgment. But, believe me, my dear children, the qualities you acquire, the patience and perseverance you practise, the powers of forbearance and endurance you exercise at home, will be of the greatest service to you hereafter in the world. Those who are good, lenient, and forgiving in the circle of their own family, cannot be stern, presumptuous, and unfeeling out of doors. Those who love father and mother and sisters, with deep and anxious solicitude, with ardent affection, with true and unflinching devotion, must feel for others ; and, sympathising with them, they will readily show mercy and compassion.

My dear children, we shall not find it difficult to manifest pity and commiseration, if we remember, that it is impossible always to know, how the

faulty have been led into error; if we recollect, that it is surely better to pardon even the wicked, thus hoping to bend the stiff-necked, and soften the stubborn spirit by kindness, than to deal cruelly, perhaps, with the innocent, who may stand unjustly accused of guilt; if we constantly bear in mind, and acknowledge before the tribunal of God, that a searching glance into the most secret chambers of our own heart, into the depths of our own mind, will reveal a humiliating picture of weaknesses, of ever-recurring faults, convincing us, only too painfully, how much we stand in need of indulgence, of clemency, and of compassion ourselves.

“Oppress not the widow,” says our text. Have you ever reflected, my dear children, how great a task she is bound to fulfil? It is the burden of double duties, the arduous performance of which never ceases to weigh upon her. She must be both father and mother to her orphan children. She has to exert the authority, the energy, the vigour of mind, and, with her weaker frame, the bodily strength too, of a father. She has to toil for her sons and daughters, ruling them by the power of her will, of her discernment—providing for their maintenance, protecting them, carving out their road in the world. And yet she does not abdicate her womanly functions; she watches with the tenderness, with the solicitude, of a

mother, over every instant of her children's existence; she tends them in health and in sickness, warding off harm from the loved ones, and giving them, with a smile of delight—even at a great cost of exhausting labour, of time, of sleep, of rest, perhaps of health—all the happiness with which her own most strenuous exertions, and her own entire devotion, can embellish their days.

The responsibilities of the poor widow are indeed heavy and numberless. With the vivid picture of them upon our memory—with the reality of those endless cares and anxieties before our eyes—I trust and believe, that the idea of oppressing one so burdened will never occur to us; but that, on the contrary, the deepest sympathy will always be awakened by her trials and sorrows; and that there are few among us, who would not strive to lighten the weight of care under which she may be struggling, day by day, along the road of life.

And the fatherless—to them, also, let us be merciful; for their lot is indeed a sad one. They may, from earliest childhood, have been deprived of the fostering care of their parents, and have been cast among strangers—not, perhaps, unkind and unpitying, but busy with their own worldly affairs, full of their own troubles; not oppressing the fatherless, but heedless of their claims, or unable to do justice to them. The

poorest father, and the most helpless mother—yes, parents sick, suffering, steeped to the lips in misery—remain invaluable treasures to their children. If they cannot give them sufficient food or raiment, they can and do give them love; and that love is a flame which warms the heart and purifies it, illumines the mind, guides the steps, and points to great duties and their fulfilment. That love is a safeguard, is an anchor; but when the dark wave of death has swept it away, the poor orphans are sent adrift on the wide sea of life. It is true, that God in heaven, by whose inscrutable decrees they have been bereft, and who feeds the birds of the air and the lambkins of the fields, will not allow them to perish. But His divine will has graciously appointed us to be the humble instruments of His beneficence; and though friends, however numerous and zealous, cannot replace affectionate parents, we should endeavour, by all means in our power, not merely to show mercy and compassion to the fatherless, but also to shield them from harm, and teach them, by gentle care and solicitude, those long-forgotten or never-learnt lessons of love, which guard from evil and despair.

And the stranger, who lands on our shores with an imperfect knowledge of our language, of our habits and customs, with a bodily frame soon to be tried by our climate, impaired perhaps, ere long,

by its vicissitudes; the stranger, who comes in search of prosperity and of a new home, who stands alone, checked by obstacles, cast down by difficulties, should we not welcome him as a brother? Otherwise he might as well have been shipwrecked on a desert island, where the sun shines also, and the sky is blue overhead, and the dew wreathes hills and valleys with its sparkling jewels, and flowers bloom and berries ripen, and birds flutter through the air, and the animals of the field graze unharmed, and where the stranger might live—but without sympathy or love, to make life enjoyable.

And the poor—let us execute true judgment with regard to them and show them mercy, while we remember the fearful temptations to which poverty often exposes even the strongest minds. Apathy, discontent, hopelessness, bitterness of spirit, envy, are all insidious enemies, assailing and surrounding the needy. Let us remember our duties towards our suffering brethren, and do what we can to supply their necessities, to alleviate their distress, to help them, to raise them in the world. It is true, that our best exertions cannot give parents to the orphan, a home to the stranger, wealth to the poor; but we may do some good; and this encouraging hope should strengthen us for every noble exertion.

“Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart,” says our text. My dear children, you will find it easy to obey the commands of the Lord God Almighty, as vouchsafed to you in the words just quoted. Suspicion is venomous; it corrupts the minds and hearts of those who harbour it, and often poisons also the suspected. The distrustful banish all the flowers of happiness from their imagination, and allow hissing snakes to coil around their thoughts. They think and dream of nought but coldness, callousness, and ingratitude; of hatred and revenge; of envy, falsehood, and dishonesty; and, naturally enough, those accused of ingratitude, soon cease to be thankful; those suspected of hatred, cease, ere long, to be loving; and, although warmth of feeling, generosity of mind, truth of speech, and honesty of conduct, may be proof against all accusations and suspicions, yet the best and strongest must feel aggrieved and injured, when they become objects of unjust charges and imputations, whether openly expressed or half concealed.

My dear children, I have endeavoured to explain to you the meaning of the holy text, the great strength of which appears to lie in the three first words, “Execute true judgment”; for they involve the duty of dealing with others, as we

should hope and pray to be dealt with, not merely by our brethren, but by Almighty God, whose compassion is indeed inexhaustible, and whose mercy is boundless.

XVIII.

“THAT WHICH I KNOW NOT, TEACH
THOU ME.”

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

There is very little knowledge that human beings possess intuitively, and that can truly be called inborn. On the contrary, they are dependent, from their birth, upon all around them for help and advice; while the animals of the earth, the fish of the ocean, the birds, and even insects of the air, are, by the decree of Almighty God, independent of each other, and marvellously gifted, by His beneficence, with the faculty called instinct, which teaches them to provide nourishment for themselves at all seasons, enables them to seek shelter and protection against rain and cold, and to find or make dwellings for themselves and their little ones. The gardens, woods, and forests, the hedges, fields, and meadows, are full of poisonous berries, bearing much resemblance to wholesome bays; the coral fruit of the briony is not unlike the scarlet beads that glisten on the boughs of the

holly; and the produce of the deadly nightshade varies little in form and colour from the rubies that gleam among the sombre foliage of the yew tree; yet thrush and linnet, and the myriads of winged songsters that throng the skies, do not err in their selection; they keep away from noxious fruits, and feast upon the harmless sweets with which bountiful nature has filled her banqueting halls. The birds are not taught to fly, nor to build their wonderful nests; the Lord has given them instinct, and they obey its mysterious laws.

The lambkins in the meadows need no teaching to distinguish the snowy or crimson clover with its honeyed scent and taste, and all the fresh, nourishing grasses of the land, from the poisonous herbs and blossoms that grow in the same field, that spring from the same soil. The lambs are not guided by the science of the botanist, but "the Lord is their shepherd"; He leads the flocks to green pastures, and to clear, crystal rills.

And the insects, do they receive any instruction from those that came before them? No; the spider weaves his lace-like web, the bee gathers her treasures from the calyces of flowers to form her cells, as she did thousands of years ago, without plans or designs. Bird, spider, and bee, live and work in obedience to the unfailing dictates of instinct, which the goodness of Almighty God has framed for them. But the child, when first ushered

into the world, is the most helpless of created beings. It is dependent upon others for care, for support, for nourishment. It must be taught to walk, step by step; to speak, by lisping every syllable separately; it learns every conscious movement slowly, every new word laboriously. Though we are all aware of it, my dear children, we easily forget, that ours was indeed complete helplessness, and that we derive all our knowledge, either directly or indirectly from others. We are long fancy ourselves above the necessity of receiving instruction or good counsel, and we soon think, that we have nothing more to learn, whereas it is the will of our heavenly Father, that the training of all our powers shall never cease, from the moment we awake in the cradle to the light of the world, until we close our eyes again in death.

My dear children, let us then take to heart the following words of Holy Scripture: “What I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more” (Job xxxiv. 32). It is strange, how little we observe, and how much teaching we require; how often the clearest, easiest lessons must be repeated, ere they sink into the mind to dispel ignorance, to guide us, and keep us aloof from harm. However discerning and far-sighted we may be, we frequently notice only the outward appearance of men and things, only the bright, attractive, or the repelling exterior of the objects which surround us;

the dangers that may lurk beneath the surface often escape our eyes; and the hidden qualities may no less elude our attention. Elihu, reproving Job, exhorts him to address to the Almighty the words of our text in anxious supplication, and humble promise of amendment. Truly, without the lessons graciously vouchsafed to us by the Lord, we should be entirely ignorant; but we ought to remember, my dear children, that although we implore Him for light in our darkness, though all teaching comes from Him, yet His lessons reach us through human influence, through those whom His beneficence has enabled to acquire knowledge, through our parents, our first and most dearly cherished instructors, through our friends and well-wishers, through those older and more experienced than ourselves.

My dear children, the wisest are those who know and feel how much they have still to learn; those who, throughout life, and in a humble spirit, seek information from all sources; and there is every probability, that they will also become the best, the most conscientious of human beings. The more they know, the more they will be able to appreciate the endless blessings and mercies of God, the countless wonders and glories of His works; the better they will understand their duties; the more anxious will they feel to fit themselves for the zealous fulfilment of their mission.

There is no art, the cultivation of which does not tend to raise us above the smaller annoyances, vexations, and disappointments incidental to life, and the devotion to which does not lift us on high-soaring pinions to the contemplation of all that is beautiful and sublime. It is scarcely possible to study music without being swayed by the ineffable power of the voices of creation, so varied and so impressive, by those sweet melodies which sound amid groves and bowers, even in the stillness of the night, softly wafted through the air by the gentle nightingale; by those whispers of the breeze sighing through the foliage of the oak and willow, by the thunder of the torrent pouring its waters into the sea, by the sound of the waves raging so furiously over the deep, or dying so calmly on the beach. We feel the potent spell of all these harmonies; and if we reproduce them in our own efforts, if we find them echoed in the poems of others, if we play on stringed instruments, or sing, to join the universal hymn, or if we listen to the choruses of heaven and earth, we seem to leave all worldly cares behind us; strife and discord disappear, and we feel that harmony should reign by our own hearth, in the circle of our loved ones, in the wider sphere of our friends, indeed, as far as our influence reaches; and, as in nature, so, if possible, among men, to the confines of the globe.

There is no artist, endeavouring to paint the marvels of creation, striving to fix upon canvas the brilliant sunset glow, or the enchanting promise of a bright day, the jewelled arch of hope after destructive floods, or the eternal snows of Alpine scenery, the smiling charms of the luxuriant south, the lands wreathed with flowers, and festooned with the leaves and tendrils of the vine—there is no artist thus employed, who is not purified and ennobled by his labours, and who does not at the same time improve and civilize his fellow-beings. Those who emblazon in unfading colours the great events of history, the exploits of heroes, or who enshrine in immortal pages the sufferings and calamities that befall individuals or nations; those who bring near to almost every home, however humble, to almost every fire-side, however lowly, the lives and deeds of the good and great, and the scenes of valour, piety, and self-sacrifice enacted on earth, do they not become noble teachers by raising human nature to the appreciation of all that is admirable and soul-stirring? And poets and philosophers, do they not, by their undying songs, and by their treasures of thought and meditation, help to develop the best and highest abilities of their brethren?

All the adepts in art and science will surely exclaim: "What I see not, teach thou me!" For there appear to be no earthly limits, no bounda-

ries to knowledge ; and every day sees new branches and innumerable fresh leaves added to the imperishable tree of human lore, which, like the banyan, sends forth its vigorous saplings far and wide.

My dear children, if secular acquirements are of so much value, and so eagerly sought after by the indefatigably active, by the faithfully persevering, by the ardent, the zealous, and the enthusiastic among men, how infinitely more precious is the knowledge of the human heart, of its strength and of its weakness, of its internal enemies, and of the foes that beset it from without, in the shape of numberless temptations and perils? The secrets of science, and the successful devotion to music, painting, and sculpture, are not within the reach of every one ; but all the conscientious among us may hope to know and to understand the duties of life, upon the fulfilment of which our well-being and that of those around us depend far more essentially than upon mere worldly distinction and eminence. Indeed, whatever position we may occupy, whatever fame may encircle our brow, we cannot be happy, we cannot give happiness to others, unless we live in humble obedience to the sacred laws vouchsafed to us by Almighty God. We require all the energies of our mind, all the qualities of our heart, all the aims of our immortal soul, to keep the commandments

of the Lord, and not to transgress His divine precepts. And, however acute our own judgment may seem, be quite sure, my dear children, there is much that we cannot fathom, much that others perceive clearly, while our own view is obscured by prejudices or prepossessions, by our own blinding interests, or perhaps by the force of our affections. We are humanly imperfect; we may constantly, though, perhaps, unwittingly, give offence, and fall into error; and though we notice the faults and shortcomings of others, we do not know or heed our own. Should we not say, then, both mentally and audibly: "What I see not, teach Thou me"? Should we not pray to the Lord in heaven for guidance, and seek advice from those on earth who, by their knowledge, experience, and sincerity, deserve our confidence and respect?

Everything we possess comes from God; we exist by His will, and enjoy life by His goodness. Let us pray to Him for the blessings of health, as without them we can scarcely hope to be useful; let us implore Him for strength, that we may be able to labour with untiring zeal; for long life, to carry our plans into execution, and realise our hopes and wishes; for perseverance, that we may toil unceasingly to attain the accomplishment of good and great objects; for patience, that we may not be hindered in a career of active

devotion by the annoyances and minor trials of our existence ; for energy, to vanquish difficulties and overcome obstacles ; for fearlessness, to encounter danger and wage war against it ; and for that higher and more valuable kind of courage—fortitude—which sustains us in times of suffering and bereavement.

But, my dear children, let us not forget that, although every power and every faculty we possess comes from the Almighty, and is beneficently bestowed upon us by Him, our knowledge is mostly derived from those around us, from their words and writings, from their deeds and examples. The Omnipotent teaches us chiefly and generally through human agencies. To bow down in the morning, and to breathe orisons at night, to fold our hands in prayer, supplicating our heavenly Creator to teach us what we see not, and then, during the day, to turn a deaf ear to good advice, to gentle reproof and rebuke—or to reproof and rebuke, though well meant, perhaps not always gently administered—is to misunderstand our text, is to be haughty and stubborn, is to worship with the lips, and not with the heart. The teaching that proceeds directly from God, my dear children, often comes in the form of trials and afflictions ; and though we all feel that “ whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom He delighteth,” yet

we ought to remember, that children really good and dutiful do not wait for chastisement to perform their task. They know the wishes of their parents, and endeavour to fulfil them; they listen to the fond voice of affection, and obey its behests. Advice, example, and the lore of experience, are treasured by them; and the habit of attending to the daily lessons of life fits them gradually for the accomplishment of the highest duties.

Our text says: "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." But it is not merely iniquity that we should anxiously shun, and the heinousness of which becomes perhaps suddenly revealed to us by some overwhelming punishment. We ought, by carefully avoiding the commission of smaller faults, to strengthen ourselves that we may repel the bewildering seductions and terrible dangers which lead to iniquity. "What I see not, teach Thou me," are beautiful words, my dear children. We cannot repeat them too often in our prayers, nor act upon them too zealously in our daily intercourse with others. Let us strive to learn from morning till night; let all good lessons penetrate deeply into our memory, so that, with the blessing of the Almighty, they may produce both flowers and fruits—flowers of delight and fruits of goodliness, for the benefit and enjoyment of all those committed to our care.

XIX.

HOLINESS OF THE SABBATH.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

Among the great blessings which Almighty God, in the fulness of His bounty, has graciously bestowed upon us, none appears more productive of beautiful and beneficent results, of real advancement, of true happiness, than the ordination of labour—than the law which enjoins us to work, and thus to earn the rewards held in store for all zealous labourers by the inexhaustible goodness of the Lord. Activity and industry give value and interest to each passing hour; they increase the enjoyment and lighten the cares of life. It is surely impossible, my dear children, to be over-active, over-industrious: every day brings its duties, and without diligence, their faithful performance could not be undertaken nor accomplished.

But, after the exertions of the week, the body requires rest to recruit its strength; and the hard-worked mind—harassed, tortured perhaps,

by worldly anxieties — stands in need of repose. It seeks and finds it in the contemplation of those higher objects removed from earthly troubles, in ardent prayers and supplications, in fervid hymns of thankfulness, and in the inspired writings of our lawgiver and our prophets.

My dear children, the Holy Scriptures contain admirable precepts for every day of our existence; and there is not a duty, towards the accomplishment of which the sacred laws do not point. The Book of Books is pervaded by a grandeur and solemnity which must ever fill the human mind with awe; while the wondrous Volume retains in all centuries a freshness, a powerful vitality, an immortal youth, which carries its divine eloquence, throughout all generations, to the minds and hearts of energetic men, of gentle women, and even of young children. The Bible is not a work belonging to by-gone ages, to past times; it remains, in undimmed beauty, the inalienable property of all ages, of all times — of the past, the present, and the future. It has provided for the necessary alternation of labour and repose, by making the observance of the day of rest one of its fundamental injunctions. Let us, then, turn to its pages, and take for our text to-day the following words: “Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary: I am the Lord” (Lev. xix. 30).

God commands us to observe the days of holy

commemoration, set apart by His will; and you may easily understand, that obedience to the heavenly ordinance in this instance, as in all others, will yield to you, my dear young friends, great blessings to embellish your existence, to purify your souls, to elevate your thoughts, and to imbue them with that tranquillity which enables you to enter the turmoil of active life, to exert your energies in coping with its difficulties, and yet to preserve a calm view of your duties, and an undisturbed consciousness of your responsibilities.

It is very true, my dear children, that at the close of each day, when we fold our hands in prayer, we may look back to the hours spent in useful labour or in earnest study; and that, remembering our deficiencies, our faults and shortcomings, we may implore the bounty and mercy of the heavenly Creator to strengthen our endeavours, to support our weakness; so that the morrow may prove less imperfect, that it may contain fewer failures, more successful efforts, and better deeds. But towards evening, when overwhelmed with fatigue, it is but a short time, that we can give to serious reflections; and the Almighty's beneficence soon draws the curtains of night around the slumbers of His children, when eager wishes, joyous or ardent hopes, holy aspirations, rapidly fade into vague dreams, and are lost, ere long, in that deep, invigorating sleep

which the Lord has graciously given for the renewal of our powers.

Though religious feelings should animate our whole existence—and let us trust, my dear children, that they may always guide our actions—yet in a busy life, replete with duties towards parents, brothers, sisters, and friends, towards all around us, towards ourselves, we do not find the day sufficiently long and calm, nor our leisure undisturbed enough, to devote many hours to the pious worship of the great Bestower of all enjoyments and blessings. Therefore, His words are: “Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary.” The fourth commandment says: “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath, and hallowed it.”

It may be necessary to explain, my dear children, how we should keep that sacred day. You need not be told, that on it all labour should be avoided. You are young; and after well-sustained exertions, and perhaps hourly fatigues, you will look forward eagerly to a time of complete repose, to a cessation from what you, no doubt, consider very arduous work. You will, therefore, hail the Sabbath with delight; you will gladly take off your week-day apparel, and put on your new garments; and, with a light step and still

lighter heart, you will proceed to the temple of God Almighty, there to join the chorus of solemn thanks to our merciful Father, there to listen with earnest attention to advice and exhortation from pious and eloquent lips. It is right you should do so, my dear children. Yet it is not enough to reverence the Lord on the Sabbath merely by an alteration in our mode of life, by service more lengthy, though not more fervent, than that which we offer when we rise at early morn, or ere we lay our head on the pillow at night; to worship Him by long-protracted attendance in the house of prayer, by absence of fatiguing labour, of exhausting and harassing toil. To observe the Sabbath is to separate it, in our mind and in our heart, from days and times devoted to our usual pursuits, is to remove from it all outward considerations, all earthly vanities and frivolities. It would be better still if we could banish from it all cares and anxieties; but that is, humanly speaking, often impossible; they will obtrude themselves, and, although ardent supplication may cause them to press less heavily upon us, we cannot drive them entirely from our soul.

On the day blessed and hallowed by the Lord, we should ask ourselves if the preceding week has been spent in faithful obedience to the sacred commandments of Almighty God; if, in the desire of promoting our worldly aims, we may not perhaps

have lost sight of the admirable precepts contained in the Bible, and designed to regulate our conduct; if we have endeavoured strictly to fulfil our duties to all around us, and succeeded in doing good, in giving satisfaction and pleasure, in avoiding the infliction of pain; if we have been meek and gentle in manner and word, charitable in thought and deed, unselfish, and devoted to the welfare of our brethren in speech and action.

We should not ask ourselves how far we may have been successful in buying and selling, in hiring and lending, in seeking and obtaining, in receiving and giving, in speculating and bartering, in risking, in saving. These are questions and interests which should form no portion of our thoughts on the Sabbath-day—the day blessed and hallowed by the Lord. But, my dear children, as religion, centered in pure and lofty feelings, should guide all our actions, we may well enquire, and cannot do so too earnestly on the day of rest, when away from the conflict of opposing interests, when removed from irritating influences, whether truthfulness has never forsaken us during the week, nor justice, more rare than kindness, abandoned us during the busy days of toil in our intercourse with those who constitute our circle, our world; whether we may not have been too exacting to others, too lenient to ourselves, allowing apathy and indolence to usurp the place of

activity and industry; whether we have made good use of all our powers and energies, and have not wasted our time, our opportunities of serving and of aiding those confided to our care; whether we have not recklessly endangered our health, overtaxed the strength of others, foolishly rejected sincere advice, spurned the best examples, or disregarded the voice of friendship and experience, while we conformed to models from which we should have turned away with fear and repugnance. And having faithfully examined the past, and endeavoured to bring before the tribunal of our conscience every thought, every passing idea, every word and deed harboured, spoken, and achieved during the week just gone by; having thus scanned our conduct with the utmost care and attention, let us deliver judgment upon it with the greatest severity. It is only by placing our faults in the unmitigated glare of the most searching ray of light, that their ugliness, and the dangers with which they threaten us, become apparent.

And then, my dear children, we will pray to God; but not merely out of the leaves of the sacred book, and in the beautiful words of the prophets and inspired kings, applicable, it is true, to all times and all circumstances; we will pray to Him from the fulness of our heart, with reference to our own frailty, to our own imperfections; we

will beseech Him to arm and uphold us when we wage war against internal and external foes, to direct us when our feet deviate from the path of righteousness; to shield our eyes when they are in danger of being fascinated or dazzled by worldly pomp and vanity; to enable us, by His divine help, to vanquish our faults, and to transform them into virtues; to soften down harshness into gentleness, to change violence into ardent enthusiasm, to transmute selfism and self-worship into unflinching devotion to the happiness of others; to change pride into humility, coldness into warmth of feeling, avarice into generosity.

He, who has formed us in His own image, can and will, if we supplicate Him with earnestness, give us the power to divest our immortal soul of the shadows that surround it, and obscure its purity.

It has been very beautifully said by one, alas! no more among us, whose excellent writings owed their glowing eloquence to deep enthusiasm, to ardent zeal for the highest interests of humanity, that the Sabbath is a bridge thrown across life's troubled waters, over which we may pass to reach the opposite shore. This is an admirable truth; and I will endeavour to explain it to you, as I understand it, my dear children. God has graciously vouchsafed the Sabbath to us; but it does not become a bridge of safety and of strength,

unless with the materials abundantly given into our keeping, we build the arches ourselves that are to carry us over the whirlpools and rapids of the waters of life. Of course, our labour, however indefatigable, would be as nought, if we did not possess the celestial blessing; for without it, our most ambitious structures would soon crumble into dust; and the Psalmist justly says: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord guard the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Yet, God Almighty, in the plenitude of His beneficence, never withholds His aid from the conscientious efforts which we make to strengthen ourselves against the perils of our earthly career. Ardent faith in God's inexhaustible goodness is not sufficient to win the joys of Paradise; we must abound in good works before we cherish the hope of arriving at the gates of Heaven. To repeat hymns, and psalms, and prayers, to read the Bible, to chaunt Hosannas and Hallelujahs, to praise and glorify the Almighty's holy name, is indeed soothing to our feelings, and raises our thoughts to the sublime heights, where the merciful Creator and His angels of purity dwell; but, believe me, such pious occupations and exercises alone do not constitute the sanctification of the Sabbath, nor do they suffice to build that bridge which is to lead us earthly wanderers to the regions of eternal bliss.

My dear children, it is impossible to look around, to see the glories of creation, to rejoice in the light of day, to feel the warmth of sunshine, to be cooled by the breeze, to be nourished by the grain that springs from the dark furrows of the soil, to be refreshed by the liquid treasures of the fountain, without bowing down in humble, in fervidly grateful adoration before the heavenly Dispenser of myriads of gifts. But our pilgrimage on earth has a twofold tendency: we live for this world and the next; the immortal and the perishable elements flow on together; the divine aspirations and the human sentiments mingle their streams; we can scarcely separate them from each other, and the connexion is not dissolved before the last moments of our existence. We cannot be entirely self-seeking and worldly throughout the week, then fling off our faults, and be holy on the Sabbath;—on the contrary, during the days appointed for labour, we must be mindful of the prayers breathed, and sincere resolutions formed on the day of rest. Though our stay on this side of the grave may be short, it is the preparation for eternal life; and our zealous efforts and deeds here must enable us to reach the land of everlasting happiness.

I would, therefore, impress upon you, my dear children, the beauty, the holiness of the Sabbath in its manifold character: as a day when the mind,

freed from worldly toils and trammels, may prostrate itself before the Lord, and also rise, unchecked and unfettered, on bright-winged hopes, to the contemplation of all His glories; when thanksgivings for blessings innumerable may flow from our lips, lightening our heart, and yet filling it with renewed gratitude; since the expression of our thankfulness unveils to the inward eye the extent of our obligations; when we may enter upon a faithful self-examination, and pray for pardon at the throne of grace; when we may entreat the Almighty to grant us powerful weapons for the annihilation of the only real enemies against whom we have to contend—our faults, those faults, which may deepen into vices, and lead to the commission of sins and crimes; when we may implore the Lord, to keep us aloof from temptation, or to enable us to withstand it; when we may invoke His mercy to allow us to overcome evil, and to cultivate all good germs in our breast, so as to make them grow into noble qualities; when we may supplicate Him to give us health and vigour, that, with the aid of the kindly feelings implanted in us by His divine hand, we may learn to fulfil our duties cheerfully and benevolently; that we may strive to enlarge the circle of our usefulness, and succeed in extending our good example far and wide.

On the Sabbath, we should atone for past errors by vowing to refrain from similar faults in future;

and should fortify ourselves by heartfelt prayer, at all times to keep our word, to redeem our pledge. Thus we may hope to build a bridge, that will carry us over from the land of shadows and clouds to the realms of eternal light and sunshine.

There can be no greater mistake than to suppose, that the days of rest, when spent in prayer, without any reference to our past career, or to our intentions for the years we have still to remain on earth, are all-sufficient to win an eternity of bliss for us, notwithstanding the intervening weeks of apathy, of negligence, or, perhaps, even of recklessness. It is always easier to pray with fervour than to act with zeal; therefore, my dear children, I have laid peculiar stress upon the necessity of good works; but both action and contemplation, both labour and prayer, both meditation and study are requisite for a dutiful conduct in this world. Contemplation must fit us for active life; study and reflection prepare us for labour; and prayer strengthen and purify us to live in obedience to the Lord's beautiful and beneficent laws, that we may thus hope to earn the undimmed felicity of Heaven.

XX.

PASSOVER.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

Three festivals were, by the will of the Almighty, appointed to be celebrated annually, in commemoration of great historical events; namely, Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Let us examine the meaning of each successively, and consider to-day the import of the season, which reminds us of the miraculous redemption of our ancestors from the land of slavery. We shall found our observations on the following words from Scripture: "Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I have commanded thee in the time appointed of the month of Abib (Nisan); for in the month of Abib thou camest out from Egypt" (Exod. xxxv. 18).

My dear children, the historical significance of our three principal holidays, forms only a portion of their deep character. They hold out a two-fold interest; they awaken not merely national thoughts and feelings; for they were likewise

instituted, by our inspired lawgiver, to be solemnized in grateful acknowledgment of the gifts showered down by the bountiful Creator, for the enjoyment of all the children of men. It is difficult to fix the value of the material benefits graciously vouchsafed to us by our heavenly Father; but it seems impossible to estimate them too highly.

While we worship at the throne of God, and bow down before Him in profound gratitude, not only for the miracles which He has wrought in our favour, but also for the blessings of religion that accompany us from the cradle to the brink of the grave, and then strengthen our weakness to span the dark chasm which separates life and death from eternity, we should not underrate those treasures of His goodness, without which the earth would be a barren wilderness. Some persons, in their anxiety to spiritualise religion, would exclude from it every allusion to the external advantages which we enjoy—would, in their worship of the Lord, in their thanksgivings and prayers, separate this world entirely from the next. They would omit things corporeal and transitory from their thoughts; and while bending down, in humble adoration, before God Almighty, and promising faithful obedience to His divine commandments, would entirely banish what they call “worldliness.” But such persons, however

conscientious in their motives, and however ardent in their exertions, attempt what they can never accomplish ; and err greatly in supposing, that it is possible to draw a line of distinction between the temporal and the eternal interests of mankind. Truly, heaven, with its promised peace and its endless joys, its unclouded happiness, is superior to earth, with its daily disappointments, its ever-recurring trials, its heavy burden of cares, its sufferings of the body and of the mind ; doubtless, immortality and eternal bliss are better than time and life, however gently the former may deal with us, however calmly the latter may glide on. Indeed, immortality is so gloriously beautiful, that our limited view and understanding can scarcely comprehend all its radiant felicity ; while we know — alas ! only too painfully — the fleeting nature of time, and the uncertainty of life. But the connecting links between this world and the next are innumerable, like the ties which on earth unite our physical and mental powers, and resist all attempts at separation, save by the sword of death — that great liberator of the soul for its upward flight to the abode of celestial happiness.

The festival of Passover was celebrated by our forefathers, not merely in remembrance of their departure from Egypt, and of the wonders performed by the beneficent hand of the Almighty

for their salvation ; but also as a tribute paid to God, by thankful hearts, for the abundant produce of the land in each successive year, and without any violent suspension of the laws of nature, bountifully bestowed on all human beings, whatever their race or creed.

Passover, occurring at the commencement of the spring, is, in the East, the period when the vivifying rays of the sun mature the seeds entrusted to the earth ; and in the days of the Temple, the earliest ears of rye were then laid on the altar, as an offering of gratitude. It was the first of the three harvest feasts, and as such celebrated with joyful feelings throughout the land.

My dear young friends, you have often been told, but cannot be too frequently reminded — however humiliating the thought may appear — that we are not grateful enough to Almighty God for the countless blessings lavished upon us by divine goodness at all seasons of the year, and indeed at all hours of the day. We do not sufficiently appreciate the light of heaven, the dew, the rain, the glowing beams that call leaves and blossoms into existence, and cause the harvests to ripen. We do not duly thank the Eternal, our God, either in the depths of our hearts, or with the utterance of our lips, for the tangible gifts of His beneficence, without which our enfeebled

frame would have neither health, nor strength, nor energy to accomplish the higher duties of our calling. We may often be patient and submissive under privations and afflictions, and bear the weight of suffering with humility and fortitude: however, when bowed down with care, we can scarcely be of great service to others, nor can we actively fulfil the obligations of life; for then we lack the power necessary for the exertions which alone ensure success. Therefore, we require not merely the spiritual blessings, the ardent faith, the unwavering hope, and all the great qualities of mind and soul which enable us to obey the behests of the Lord in this world, and to win the peace and happiness promised to us in the next; but we need also the material gifts of God's benevolence, in order that our senses may be quickened, that our limbs may be strengthened, that the eye may look around and see all the work which awaits the earnest labourer—that the ear may listen, and hear every tale of woe, every complaint, every appeal—that the hands may be ready to help, to give, to soothe—that early and late we may be at our post of duty, watchful, indefatigable, devoted. How could we thus obey the will of our heavenly Father, if our bodily frame were destitute of nourishment, if we were weakened by hunger and thirst, laid low by debility, bowed down by the pressure of want?

For this reason our greatest prophet, who felt and knew the intimate, nay, the indissoluble, connexion between this world and the next—between the earth with its alternating lights and shadows, and the realms of everlasting brightness—never failed to attach a twofold meaning to the festivals instituted by divine wisdom.

The spiritual interest may have a firmer hold upon some minds, and may especially exercise a more powerful sway over the hearts and ideas of those worshippers who, from their birth far above want, have perhaps never felt true gratitude for the daily bread which nourishes them, for the milk which flows in their children's cup, and the wine which sparkles in their own; whereas the miracles recalled by the celebration of Passover, impress upon them the wondrous salvation of their forefathers, and the duty of profound thankfulness which we all owe to God Almighty, our Creator and Preserver.

The festival, in its connexion with the fostering powers of the sun, with the blessings of returning warmth and splendour, of universal life and hope, joy and song, if celebrated in southern or eastern climes as a harvest feast, would under our cooler skies, in our more temperate regions, be the re-awakening of the earth after its slumbers, after the gloom of mists and clouds, or the coldness of snows and northern winds. And surely, such a

revival of the energies of nature, with her myriads of promises, should be hailed by us with feelings of rejoicing and humble acknowledgment. For does it not manifestly show the infinite and ever-renewed goodness of the Lord? Does it not convince us how much delight, to be earned by the fulfilment of duty, His loving-kindness never ceases to provide for us? Should not the return of smiling spring, after the torpor of winter, prove, that when chilling blasts have swept over the heart, destroying its hopes, and laying it waste and bare, even then it does not remain numb and cheerless for ever; but that, similar to the earth, it enjoys, ere long, a renewal of the highest blessings, all pointing to fresh tasks and labours?

And remember, my dear children, that the best and noblest obligations devolving upon us are deeds of love, in which our whole heart should enter with unwearied zeal. Although Passover is, therefore, no longer an agricultural festival, yet, occurring in the early season of the year, it speaks to the mind by every leaflet that unfolds its delicate green, by every flower that blooms and scents the vernal air.

And now let us consider the historical meaning of Passover. You have all read the second Book of Moses, which contains the deeply interesting narrative of the departure from Egypt, of the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from the

land of bondage, and of the awful punishment which befell their oppressors. The history of the flight of our ancestors teaches great lessons to the proud and haughty of the earth, and holds out beautiful consolations to the lowly and desponding. Those lessons have, no doubt, ere now been explained to you, my dear children; but it may be desirable once more to direct your attention towards them. It is impossible to remember the greatness and power of Pharaoh, the magnificence that surrounded his throne, the mighty armies that obeyed his commands, the courtiers that bent the knee before him, and became the slaves of his despotic will; to consider the fame of the sages and sorcerers who ministered to his wishes, and accomplished wonders to satisfy every whim and craving of his fancy, but who, far from being supernaturally gifted, were only learned men, initiated in those secrets of nature, the knowledge and application of which have, by succeeding generations, been transformed into science: it is impossible to contemplate all the splendour and might of the Egyptian monarch, to recollect his stubborn spirit, and the terrible sufferings which he inflicted upon his unfortunate bondsmen, without feeling that tyranny is never practised with impunity, and that "every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;" but that the dejected, in their abyss of misery, may faithfully cling to

the thought, that "God upholdeth all who fall, and raiseth up all those who are bowed down."

The haughty among us, elated or blinded by uninterrupted prosperity, by great learning or talents, or renown, or by the possession of wealth, and who, regardless of the wants and claims of others, from their unapproachable pinnacle of power, may view the world with utter contempt, and yet expect homage and submission, are, by the celebration of Passover, forcibly reminded of the perishable nature of their greatness, and of the punishment which inevitably awaits those who, by their wickedness or their folly, change any personal superiority into a curse, whereas divine wisdom and goodness intended it to be a blessing to all around. And to the oppressed, to those who despond under the weight of persecution, the feast of unleavened bread most assuredly offers comfort in the hour of trouble and danger. It must remind them of God's providence, as beneficently shown to us all, not merely every day and throughout the year, in sustaining and nourishing us, in giving us health and vigour for the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of life, but also in healing us when we suffer most acutely, perhaps when hope and strength are waxing faintest, or when darkness and despair are nigh.

The Omnipotent who annihilated Pharaoh, that proud and hardened monarch, when in the zenith

of his power, the Omnipotent who broke the chains of the Israelites in Egypt, is the same through all ages, in all climes. He has not ceased to chastise the wicked, to humble the haughty, to support the drooping, to raise the fallen. Well may we echo the words of the Psalmist: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

The thoughts which the festival of Passover suggests are endless; and when we read the history of the passage of the Red Sea, and of the forty years spent by the Hebrews in the wilderness, every sorrowing heart may cry out from the depths of its own anguish, "I will not despair; the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

My dear children, you have heard how arduous a task it is, even in our times, to furnish provisions to invading legions, or armies passing through foreign lands; and yet the progress of civilization, the advancement of science and art, and the innumerable discoveries of our age, would seem to have greatly facilitated such an undertaking. When the Israelites encamped in the desert, there were not a few thousand soldiers to be maintained, but nearly three millions of human beings to be fed. God, however, was their Guide, and led them to green pastures. The earth made her crystal fountains gush for them, the skies showered down manna, and from the heavenly

expanse flew myriads of birds, covering the land for the sustenance of the people. Yet, great as were the material gifts then bestowed upon our forefathers by the goodness of the Lord, they sink into insignificance when compared with the spiritual blessings graciously vouchsafed to them at that period by the same boundless beneficence. For were not the slaves then delivered from mental as well as physical thralldom? Were they not led forth from a land, through the length and breadth of which idols were worshipped, and the true God was unknown? Did not the Almighty bring them out of darkness into light? Did He not break their fetters of ignorance and superstition? Was not their passage through the Red Sea the first step of transition from national degradation to national glory? Were not the unfading beauties, the immortal truths and consolations of our holy religion, then revealed to them? Were not the liberated bondsmen called God's chosen people? Do you understand the meaning of these words, do you feel their full value, my dear friends? Our ancestors were, by the mercy of God, selected from amongst all nations to receive His sacred commandments, to make them known and obeyed over the whole surface of the globe, by all men and throughout all centuries. A great mission was confided to them; it is the heirloom of their descendants, the birthright of the children of Israel. It is a

mission that imposes manifold obligations upon us, and should call into life the loftiest aims and noblest deeds. As the depositaries of holy truth—and in that sense alone are we called the chosen people, for our heavenly Father loves all His children equally, and has bestowed His blessings upon them all—let us, in humble gratitude, endeavour to prove worthy of His goodness, by an ever conscientious fulfilment of our duties; and anxiously pray to Him, that His power may uphold our weakness, grant success to our efforts, and make them conducive to the happiness of our fellow-wanderers on earth.

XXI.

PENTECOST.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

We find the divine commandment for the observance of Pentecost in the 16th verse of the 23rd chapter of Exodus, namely : “ And thou shalt celebrate the feast of harvest with the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field.” No doubt, in our homes and our synagogues we keep the day holy ; we offer up prayers and thanksgivings, and bow to the Lord God Almighty. Yet it is remarkable, that the same pious zeal and grateful ardour are not devoted to Pentecost as to the preceding festival. It is difficult to understand the great difference made between the two holidays, not by our teachers, but by their flocks and congregations. Passover is solemnized in commemoration of our deliverance from the tyranny of Pharaoh ; and in the days of the Temple it possessed the additional importance of being a national feast of rejoicing and thankfulness for the first ears of rye brought to maturity by the vernal rays of the sun.

Surely God's omnipotence and His inexhaustible goodness are as much shown by the daily manifestations of His infinite care and loving-kindness as by any interruption of the laws of nature; and the feast which we were commanded to observe, in grateful acknowledgment of the blessings of a bountiful harvest, should be as sacred in our eyes as the one which recalls to our memory the marvellous flight from Egypt, and the early annual hope and firstlings of luxuriant crops. If any difference can be made in the appreciation of the heavenly gifts, which are, in reality, all equally admirable and beneficent, the fulfilment should be held superior to the promise; and the constant proofs of the ever-watchful protection of the Lord should be even dearer to us than the demonstration of His power, as vouchsafed for our salvation in times of threatening danger. For these reasons, Pentecost ought always to appear quite as important as Passover. You know, my dear children, that, when originally instituted, it marked, in a solemn manner, the completion of the harvest, when the first loaves prepared from the new wheat were offered on the Table of the Sanctuary.

The time when this holy ritual was enjoined, and the epoch of trial and probation in the desert, lie in the distant past. They rolled by more than three thousand years ago; the Judges that ruled

over the children of Israel, the prophets that guided them, the kings that swayed their destinies, the heathen nations that encompassed and conquered them, even the haughty Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans, have all passed away ; Jerusalem itself belongs to Mohammedan rulers ; the Temple is in ruins ; the Altar is broken ; our brethren are dispersed over the whole expanse of the globe. But the laws of God are immutable ; they will never cease to sustain life and hope and faith. They are still ours ; our inheritance in whatever country we may have been born, at home and abroad, while surrounded by our loved ones, or while journeying in foreign lands, or dwelling among strangers ; they are our buckler and our shield, our rock and our fortress.

The festival of Pentecost reminds us, that in the days of the Temple all the cities and villages of Palestine celebrated the second harvest feast by sending forth their population, when many passed the nights under the clear vault of heaven, the moon and stars keeping silent watch over the faithful, while they prayed, and meditated, and lifted up their voices with sacred song and harmony to the throne of the Almighty ! At early morn, the elders of the community called the people together, to lead them to the mountain of Zion, to the House of God. The procession was then formed. The sacrificial animals, with gilded

horns, wreathed with branches of the olive-tree, symbolical of peace, moved on in front, followed by the worshippers, bearing flutes and harps and timbrels. At the gates of Jerusalem, the pilgrims were met by the cordial greetings of the inhabitants, and through the streets, strewn with fragrant herbs and summer's brightest flowers, they moved slowly along until they reached the Temple. Then they carried baskets, filled with the first produce of their gardens and orchards, towards the Sanctuary, where the High-priest placed the gifts on the Shrine, and the voices of thousands of Levites united to chant with ardent solemnity, "Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel, and the land that floweth with milk and honey."

My dear children, we do not sacrifice meat or burnt-offerings any more, neither snowy lambs, nor faultless kids, nor finest wheaten bread, nor purple or golden grapes; we do not pour the oil of the olive upon the altar, nor cause the fragrance and silver clouds of frankincense to ascend from it; but we are still called upon to give to the Almighty the first-fruits of our labours. What is thereby meant in our days, has already been explained to you; but there are lessons which cannot be impressed too deeply on the human heart; and it is impossible to repeat too often, that we should devote unto the Lord, unto the obedience

of His holy laws, our good deeds, the fruits of our thought and time and care, of our best energies, of our most glowing enthusiasm, of our unconditional service. We should yield up to Him the first-fruits of our labours, the zealous works accomplished in our youth, in our years of health and vigour, when life and its duties extend broadly before us, and ere infirmities, trials, and sorrows have impaired our powers of usefulness. We should give to our heavenly Father, not merely the tardy and imperfect fulfilment of obligations wrung from us by the bitter experience of unsuccessful struggles, by the sharp, harrowing pangs of remorse, but the produce, "the first-fruits," says our text, of the labours which we have bestowed on the fields.

Rich harvests are won only by patient industry. Surely God could, by the mere force of His will, make them spring spontaneously from the soil; but He has wisely and beneficently decreed that they should be earned by persevering exertions: and thus what proves really valuable in our actions, is also the result of untiring diligence and true benevolence, though our most strenuous efforts would be as nought without the merciful aid and protection of the Omnipotent, just as the crops of the earth, carefully sown by the hand of the labourer, would not ripen without the blessing of the divine Creator, without the refreshing dew

and fertilizing rain of heaven, and the warming rays of the sun.

Remember, my dear young friends, that God has said : " And none shall appear before Me empty " : which signifies, that none shall lead a vain and frivolous life. When we look around us, and see, that not only the birds and insects of the air, the animals of the fields, the tenants of the seas, but also the trees and blossoms of the earth, and even the minutest blades of grass that grow, are all useful in this beauteous world, we cannot doubt, that the widest, highest sphere of duty is, by the wisdom of the Lord, assigned to the children of men.

But remember, that eager wishes, ardent impulses, and earnest resolves, although laid in all humility before the Almighty, whose heavenly blessing we fervently invoke upon them, are only germs, buds of promise, but cannot be considered fruits of excellence ; whereas years of bodily and mental health and strength spent in the unflinching fulfilment of duty, and zealously devoted to the happiness of those around us, to the prosperity and improvement of mankind, are productive of those noble actions, which alone deserve to be regarded as the fruits of our labours, and which enable us to hope that we do not appear empty before the Lord.

However, a twofold interest is attached to the

celebration of Pentecost, since you know, my dear children, that in our days the festival is likewise observed to commemorate the revelation on Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments, vouchsafed by God to our ancestors through Moses, their prophet and leader, are obeyed, not only by the Israelites in every part of the globe, but have become the fundamental laws of all civilized nations; and though more than thirty centuries have elapsed since they were first proclaimed, they are still the inalienable property of all enlightened communities, and have been handed down, from generation to generation, unaltered and unimpaired by age and time. May every child within the circle of our influence be guided by them, and feel their beauty and excellence, which we will endeavour to consider to-day.

You know, that the first words of the Decalogue are, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me." The Israelites, at the time of their release from thralldom, were, with regard to their knowledge and understanding, still in the infancy of spiritual development, and, therefore, seemed more likely to acknowledge the omnipotence of the Lord, in connexion with their miraculous salvation from the horrors of Egyptian bondage, and with that wonderful event, the passage of the Red Sea, than

in reference to the magnificence of heaven and earth; to the brightness of sun, moon, and stars; to the grandeur of mountain and flood, and all the marvels of creation, by which they had always been surrounded. And our ancestors, while impressed with the greatness of God, were taught to look upon slavery as a degrading affliction, and upon freedom as one of the highest blessings of life. Though in our age, after the anxious thought and varied experience of numberless generations, few can be ignorant of the infinite power of the Lord, yet to the Hebrews, encompassed as they were by barbarous or idolatrous tribes, nothing was more imperative than the promulgation of the great principle of the unity of God, the only and imperishable foundation of faith, and alone calculated to teach them that their redemption from the hands of the mighty monarch, before whom thousands trembled, was owing to a still more powerful sovereign, to the King of kings, to the Eternal.

“Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me,” continues the holy text. The Egyptians, whose notions the Israelites had largely imbibed, worshipped numberless divinities; and, indeed, our forefathers, in a time of discontent and irritation, during the absence of Moses on Mount Sinai, danced and knelt before the golden calf, which was, no doubt, a representation of the bull Apis.

There is no danger now, my dear children, of our bowing before such idols; but whenever frivolous objects take entire possession of the human mind, they exclude the conscientious fulfilment of duty, and usurp the place which should belong to the Almighty, I mean to the truest worship of His goodness and greatness, to the most faithful obedience of His laws.

The Lord spoke further: "Thou shalt not make to thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is under the earth: thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those that hate Me; and showing mercy to thousands, to those that love Me, and keep My commandments."

God, incorporeal and purely spiritual, is to be adored with the love of the heart and the faith of the soul; and therefore the Israelites were forbidden to represent the Almighty, and to worship Him under any form or shape, as they might have been tempted to do in imitation of the Egyptians, whose deities, as for instance, Osiris and Isis, were symbolized as human figures with ever-varying attributes; or were mere animals held in honour, as the ichneumon, the devourer of crocodiles' eggs, or the ibis, the destroyer of

venomous reptiles and insects. The Hebrews were warned that the Almighty would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third generation; and such words, emanating from a God of boundless mercy, though startling at first, and perhaps incomprehensible to the unreflecting, are in reality founded on principles of eternal justice. Parents who have neglected their health cannot transmit a vigorous organization to their children; their offspring are feeble, sickly, unfit for the active duties of life; and, in the same way, those whose minds are corrupted, whose existence is tainted with vices, with the shadows of evil example, inevitably cast a gloom over the career of their sons and daughters. They often blight it completely, and thus the wickedness of sinful fathers is visited upon their descendants, whereas the good and righteous, in a similar manner, prepare and earn blessings for their posterity.

The third commandment says: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord God will not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain." This law may perhaps be deemed less important than others, and it may be thought that there are more heinous offences than those committed by the profanation of the sacred name of the Almighty. Criminal as this infringement of the divine commandment must in itself be considered, the act of invoking the

Omnipotent, and thus unblushingly associating the name of the Holy One with disgraceful falsehood, leads to the habitual violation of truth; and nothing could more thoroughly unsettle, or more deplorably deface the human mind, and entice it more fatally into the deepest errors and into the neglect of all heavenly laws.

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” enjoins the fourth commandment. I have already endeavoured to convince you, my dear children, that the solemn character of the Sabbath consists not merely in repose from exertion, but that we sanctify the day of rest more completely and more truly by making it a time of rigorous self-examination, by looking into the remotest corners of the heart, to ascertain whether we have faithfully done all our work, and laboured conscientiously during the six preceding days for the benefit and happiness of those whom we are commanded to love as truly as ourselves.

“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Love towards affectionate parents is a feeling innate in the human breast; but the sacred text teaches us to make this inborn sentiment productive of good actions. To honour father and mother, is to devote our best abilities and energies to their service, is to revere them quite as constantly by the accomplishment of our

obligations, by our unfailing devotion, as by outward forms and protestations of attachment and respect.

The three following commandments, my dear children, prohibit sins and crimes, the commission of which I ardently hope may ever remain foreign, not merely to yourselves, but to all those with whom you are brought into contact.

The ninth injunction, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," exhorts us to refrain from injuring our fellow-beings by words, from hurting them by slander, aspersion, and defamation, either privately in our own houses, or publicly in society, or in a court of justice.

The tenth commandment, against covetous desires is, perhaps, the one which we most frequently violate; and we are apt to think that, because the offence is committed internally, in the depths of the mind, and because it often remains unrevealed to human knowledge, being apparent only to the all-seeing eye of the merciful Creator, it cannot be really sinful, nor cause much misery and evil. That, my dear children, is a misapprehension: for envy, by cankering the heart, renders it incapable of noble and generous sentiments, and sooner or later fills it with rancour, hatred, and uncharitableness.

My dear young friends, let the festival of Pentecost, which we celebrate in grateful acknowledg-

ment of so many tangible benefits, of so many spiritual blessings, remind us of the whole extent of our duties. Let us not forget them even amidst the pursuit of our most fondly valued occupations, of those manifold pleasures which God permits us to enjoy, and which He graciously places within our reach in this world of beauty and brightness. May we always remember, that the Almighty commands us to appear in His divine presence, not empty, but with a plentiful harvest of good deeds—with those fruits of our labours patiently sown by us in the fields of life.

XXII.

NEW YEAR.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

On this solemn festival, which is, in truth, called a "day of remembrance," our whole life seems to rise from the shadows of the past, and to bring vividly before us the ever-varying pictures, the ever-dissolving views of all that was once, and is no more—of all that which, in by-gone hours, filled us with the buoyancy of hope, or the tremor of fear, with the brightness of joy, the gloom of sorrow, or the bitter feelings of regret.

On this day, the first of the year, we are forcibly reminded of the alterations which, during the preceding months, have been accomplished in ourselves, as well as in everything that surrounds us. While impressed with the flight of time, and while viewing its traces, we cannot refrain from meditating on the great law of change which pervades the universe. This incomprehensible rule often appears cold and severe to our understanding; yet it is quite as frequently blessed by us with tears of happiness and gratitude, when we

witness those marvellous transformations, wrought in obedience to the inscrutable decrees of divine Providence. How strange it seems, that nothing should be permanent—that the most valued treasures should glide away from the tightest grasp—that the bonds of love should not be strong enough to clasp parents, brothers, sisters, children, in an unbroken circle of affection—that grief, sickness, death, or merely the strides of time, should rob us of the presence of those to whom we cling most fondly—that youth with its favourite, if not always faithful companion, health, should leave us—that joy, so brilliant and so sunny, the most welcome guest in castle and in cottage, should fade or suddenly disappear—that even hope, that heaven-born light, should be, if not completely quenched, often closely veiled, or hidden behind clouds! And again: what a merciful dispensation, though almost incredible in the hour of affliction, that agonizing cares, which threaten to overpower our faculty of endurance, should, ere long, be soothed, or leave us entirely—wiser and better, let us hope, but not less happy, than before the chastening.

My dear children, within the last year, progress from ignorance to knowledge, from poverty to affluence, from repeated, disheartening failures to elating success, has taken place around us. Adventurous journeys by land, and perilous voyages

over the depths of the ocean; loss of health, and recovery from sickness; tears as countless as the grains of sand on the sea-shore, and smiles as innumerable and as bright as the stars of the firmament; and births and happy unions and deaths among the pilgrims of earth, have marked the winged steps of time, which has left nothing and no one as it found them. It has passed not only over bud and flower, over orchard and corn-field; but also over little children and young maidens, over stalwart men and blooming women, over the feeble and the robust, the youthful and the aged, has it moved with mighty pinions and cutting scythe. To some it has wafted health and strength, joy and happiness; to others it has brought anxiety and suffering. It may have blanched the cheeks of the most vigorous, turned golden locks prematurely grey, deepened the traces of burning tears into the furrows of old age; or it may have helped to smooth the brow of care, to raise fresh hopes, and call new blessings into existence. It has allowed no earthly wanderer to remain untouched: onward and onward have all gone, either moving slowly and indolently along the road of life, or rushing eagerly and ardently forward in the struggle for enjoyment or distinction.

The unceasing agitation and turmoil around us seem wondrous and grand, full of examples and

warnings; but, amidst all this, the heart yearns for repose—for some peaceful oasis, undisturbed by the constant ebb and flow of the waves of human destiny, of the alternating light and darkness of this world. And this unconquerable longing after the immutable, becomes more fervid at the commencement of a new year, shrouded from our view by a curtain not more impenetrable than the veil which conceals the events of every dawning day, but appearing more mysterious when we are free from the time-absorbing labours of our existence, when we have leisure to scan the past, and wistfully to peer into the future. Then it is that, from the din which incessantly disturbs our tranquillity, we look up trustingly to the Lord of the universe; then we feel that faith in Him is the only refuge where we may always find rest, that His goodness and mercy are indeed unalterable, and that no change in our thoughts, deeds, and circumstances occurs, without leaving behind some imperishably useful reality.

Let us then, my dear children, accept with grateful sentiments the law of change, and avail ourselves of the privilege vouchsafed to us by the divine beneficence, to exclaim, on New-Year's day, with the inspired poet, "Create in me a pure heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." But, ere we enter with renovated strength upon our fresh duties, let us cast one long,

lingering look at by-gone days, and garner up the treasures which time, with its train of events, has left behind.

Riches may have melted away, but the good works performed with their aid still remain ; smiles may have died, and laughter-loving voices have been hushed around us, but surely the sight of human felicity, and the enjoyment of happiness, are great blessings, which could never have been ours without elevating our thoughts, without softening our feelings, and making us strive to win for others advantages equal to those which have fallen to our share. And the recollection of past delight, similar to the glow which sheds a halo of beauty over the landscape, after the celestial orb has sunk beneath the horizon, dwells in our memory, brightening long years, which would, perhaps, otherwise be blank and cold. Bodily or mental sufferings, much as they may have tried our fortitude, never vanish without bequeathing to us a far truer appreciation of health and of freedom from care. Do not sorrows and vicissitudes often teach us resignation and courage, meekness and humility, and, also, deep gratitude to the Lord, and unshaken faith in Him who afflicted us and relieved us all in good time ? And when we have seen life extinguished near us—the life that was our sunshine, the joy of our youth, the flame that warmed our heart with love and tenderness—does

not our grieving soul fly from the troubles of this world, to the contemplation of that blessed hereafter, where the anguish of separation and of death is unknown?

And now, my dear children, let us turn to the New Year; and, with a pure and renovated spirit, survey the gleaming path which we are to tread. It is the road of virtue, often called "narrow," but, no doubt, undeservedly so: for is there not ample space, throughout its expanse, for innumerable duties and their fulfilment—for the development of every beautiful sentiment, and of every noble quality. Myriads of human beings, in fact, all mankind, may walk along its length and breadth; little children with their appointed task, men and women with the pilgrim's staff, their burdens and obligations. There is room for all wayfarers, for the rich and the poor, the lowly and the mighty of the land. There is scope for every variety of excellence, for deeds of valour and of heroism, of devotion and of sacrifice; for acts of generosity, benevolence, and charity; for the exercise of gentleness, patience, and forbearance. There is no wider road than that of virtue; nothing relating to it can be termed narrow, except the line which separates it from the path of vice and sin.

Yet, my dear children, you must not imagine it to be as even and smooth as it is broad. On the

contrary, it is often rugged, full of difficulties and obstacles, rising to the height of mountains which must be laboriously ascended, as the fulfilment of duty may lie on the summit, amidst snow, and ice, and towering clouds.

My dear young friends, the first day of the new year is sanctified among us as the anniversary of the completion of the works of creation by the omnipotent will of the Lord. Grand and magnificent as are these wondrous works, and small as man appears in comparison with them, the hand of God formed the boundless vault of the universe, with its innumerable stars and planets, and our own dazzling sun to light and warm the globe, the animated beings of earth and air, the fields and their produce, the forests and their trees, the gardens with their fruits and flowers, the mighty oceans and rivers, with their legions of living tenants—the Lord God Almighty created them all before He called man into existence, that the whole world, in its beauty and splendour, with its countless treasures and enjoyments, should be the heirloom of Adam and his descendants. Yet during the six thousand years which have elapsed since the birth of the first man, not only incessant changes, but also infinite improvements, have been recorded; the march of progress has been uninterrupted. Brilliant and fragrant flowers bloom, sweet and refreshing fruits ripen everywhere, and

are no longer confined to the garden of Eden. Goodly harvests have gradually become more general and more plentiful; milk and honey, oil and wine, flow in greater abundance; the quarries of the earth yield more readily and more profusely their precious marbles, the mines their silver and gold, the caves of the ocean their coral sprays and their wealth of pearls. And man, who has tamed the wild animals, and made them subservient to his will, should not he have improved since his first parents beheld with rapture the green valleys of Paradise? Should he alone have remained stationary, and unable to devote himself more zealously to the service of the Lord? We have more knowledge of the frailty of the human heart, of the vacillations of the human mind, and, above all, we possess the divine Word, the truths of religion, to strengthen us at all seasons, to support us in the time of need, to uphold our failing courage; and we have inherited the experience of thousands of years to show us our errors, to teach us more clearly those ever-increasing duties, which were perhaps less obvious to preceding generations.

And, my dear children, if this be true of all mankind, is it not far more applicable still to individuals? and has not each of us to carry along on his pilgrimage the great book of the past, with its varied and invaluable lessons? And does not every hour almost add a leaf to that volume of

wisdom, and engrave, with indelible characters, additional precepts and rules on its pages?

With so faithful a monitor and companion, and with a pure heart and renovated spirit, let us then, my dear children, enter upon the consideration of the fresh duties imposed upon us by the New Year. Some have, no doubt, been carried over from the cycle of time which has just closed; others are debts of gratitude, imperatively demanding payment, or labours commenced, which we had not the leisure or the health and strength to finish. Let us hope, that there was no deficiency of good-will or zeal on our part; for, in that case, the obligations left half fulfilled are likely to weigh doubly upon us now, and to tax us more heavily. The day is short, and every division of it has work for industrious hands, energetic minds, and willing hearts. Remember, that it is an epitome of life, and should not end without being marked by earnest endeavours and deeds of benevolence. And however arduous our task may appear, however sleepless and indefatigable the activity required, we must recollect to thank the Lord for having endowed us with the power and ability of exerting ourselves beneficially.

But the New Year brings new cares to us. We cannot hope to live on undisturbed in the happy performance of duty, unchecked by bodily pain or

mental anguish, uninterrupted by doubts or scruples respecting the real usefulness of our labours, unhindered by difficulties from without, or unassailed by reproaches, perhaps even by calumny. Although we cannot live without seeing our horizon obscured by the gloomy shadows of anxiety, we must not suspend our work, nor clasp our hands in despair, but should persevere, and strive with unabated vigour to stem the tide of adverse circumstances, ever hoping to weather the storm, while we look up trustingly to heaven, and seek shelter from angry whirlwinds near our merciful Father at the helm.

Yet we trust that the New Year will bring renewed gifts—energy to the drooping, cheerfulness to the desponding, relief to the suffering: and, with these blessings, should arise the anxious desire to merit, and conscientiously to employ all the treasures lavished upon us by the bounty of the Lord—the desire to exert ourselves, that they may not be said to have fallen to the lot of the niggardly and selfish, but that, with divine aid, they may be shared by others, and become ever-flowing sources of prosperity and delight to many. The New Year loosens old ties, breaks old fetters; evil connections may be relinquished, dangerous bonds severed; false friends, and wicked associates, and pernicious habits abandoned; and we ourselves may be restored to all that is good and pure.

But health and life, too, may pass away from us, and leave us standing before the throne of judgment, at the portals of eternity. Let us, my dear children, contemplate this, the greatest of all changes, not with feelings of dread, but in a spirit of true faith; and may we in earnest supplication to the Lord God Almighty find, not only courage to look forward to the end of our earthly career, but increased zeal, that every day be replete with dutiful endeavours, and thus prepare us to appear before our heavenly Father in all humility, and offering to Him the successful labours of our hands.

With such reflections, my dear children, we will begin the New Year, and eagerly scan the manifold lessons of the past; may they enhance our reverence and piety, increase our obedience to the laws of our holy religion, fill us with radiant hope for the future, kindle in us undying enthusiasm for works of love and charity, and inspire every faithful worshipper ardently to breathe the prayer of the Psalmist: "Create in me a pure heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

XXIII.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

The anxious desire to worship the Lord on this solemn fast and day of humiliation in accordance with the precepts of our sacred faith, urges us to accomplish duties more essential for our own welfare and that of our brethren than perhaps any other obligations which may devolve upon us; for they lead to the conscientious fulfilment of every important task. Indeed, our duties form a chain of innumerable links closely knitted together, though very dissimilar, some being mere silken ties or bright circles wreathed with flowers, among which we move with buoyant delight, while others press upon us with the weight of iron. Let us strive to remember whether we have always carried that strangely-woven chain along with us on the road of life, or if we have sometimes escaped from its trammels, perhaps allowed its heavier portions to rust, or even been guilty of tearing them asunder.

Before we venture to appear in the temple of the Almighty to entreat His pardon, it behoves us

to examine our past career with earnestly probing attention, and to act in faithful obedience to the following words of the prophet : “ Let us search our ways, and investigate them ; then we can return unto the Lord.” This scrutiny is the first, but not the least difficult, of five important duties demanded of us on this day. We may have sinned from ignorance, from weakness of mind, or frailty of heart, yielded to attacks from without, or succumbed to internal foes ; we have perhaps been stubborn and stiff-necked, hurried into wrong-doing by the warmth of our emotions, or kept aloof from the path of benevolence and charity by a paralysing coldness of disposition : but although we have probably known the extent of our error, I am afraid, that in many cases we have allowed the curtain of oblivion to fall upon our mistakes and misdeeds, forgetting that it is not easy to draw its folds aside. Let us, however, make a resolute attempt to penetrate into the recesses of the heart, and, notwithstanding the prevailing obscurity, we shall, ere long, find our way in the labyrinths of conscience, as we should in a dungeon, or while walking during a dark night, with black clouds above, and shadows encompassing us. At first all is confusion, but soon our eyes accustom themselves to the absence of light, and from the surrounding gloom the most important objects detach themselves, until their outlines appear before us almost

as distinctly as at noonday. And when our faults become visible like foul stains, when our sins rise from the mists of the past like appalling ghosts, from which we recoil with horror and disgust, then let us prostrate ourselves before the All-merciful, and exclaim: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." And well may we invoke the blessing of the Omnipotent upon our efforts when we remember that He is long-suffering and a God of forgiveness, and recall to mind the following cheering words: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord: and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

My dear children, when we, or those whom we love, are laid low by sore disease, what is it that we dread even more than the suffering connected with illness? The avenging sword of death. Sickness is a derangement of the powers of life, and unless, with God's blessing, it be subdued by medical skill, and by the natural energies of the patient, death ensues: a wound may destroy the usefulness of the limbs, or annihilate the senses; the blind painter or architect is dead to his art, the paralysed sculptor or musician lives no more as such. And so it may be with the inner man, with his mind or heart; but the danger is far greater. What was perhaps a mere speck extends into a plague-spot, deepens into a cancer, which

poisons the whole system, and substitutes vice and sin for piety and virtue, moral death for religious life. But God wishes us to be healed—He wishes us to live and to repent.

And now let us consider our second duty on this day. The first was an anxious survey of the path which lies behind us, and an eager search into the mysterious realms of our thoughts and feelings. The second should not be simply a contemplation of our faults, but a confession of them, uttered with pain and shame before the heavenly tribunal of justice, and a frank, though blushing, avowal of them, if needed, among men. It is true that God reads our hearts, but those weak and erring hearts do not know their own failings until they have laid themselves bare before the Almighty. It is not enough to see what is wrong; we must declare it to be so in the sight of the Lord; and then the remedy will soon suggest itself, and the cure will follow speedily. How could it be otherwise in the world of the soul, out of which emanate the ways of life? Morasses and stagnant waters, from which ascend deleterious vapours, and where nothing bright ever shines, except the *ignis fatuus* to delude benighted wayfarers, are often seen by listless thousands, and are yet allowed to remain untouched, engendering destructive fevers; but no sooner are they stigmatized as crying evils, than societies

and governments come forward to reclaim the land, to recover the swamps from the wild birds of the air, and the creeping things of the earth.

And, thirdly, should we acknowledge the existence of plague-spots in the mind, of leprosy and pollution in the heart, without striving to purify ourselves by the gushing tears of repentance, without labouring to erase those dark stains by the keen blades of regret, or the daggers of relentless remorse?

But even such contrition would be insufficient, and mere aimless sorrow, unless it led to the fulfilment of our fourth duty on this day of humiliation, namely, to that of atonement. There are many means, my dear children, of expiating the errors of the past; and they issue alike from the same centre, the penitent heart. Above all, let us bring to our aid humility and truthfulness, and banish for ever that pride and falsehood which tempted us to wander astray. In doing evil, while we were able to discriminate between right and wrong, we proved false to ourselves, and weak as well as proud and disdainful; for we closed our ears to the whispering of conscience, disregarded the advice of experienced friends, and placed ourselves beyond the reproofing voices of the world. However, there is a mode of atoning, infinitely more arduous still, which consists not merely in craving the forgiveness of those whom we have

been so unfortunate as to pain by our conduct, by our words and actions, or to injure either willingly or inadvertently, but which induces us to restore to them, if possible, even more than the advantages and benefits of which our want of thought or our sinfulness has perhaps robbed them.

I do not allude here, my dear children, to the commission of theft. We may, throughout life, have shuddered at the remotest idea, never even have harboured the thought, of transgressing the eighth commandment; and it is yet possible that we have deprived others of most valuable possessions, of smiles and hopes of happiness; we may in wrath or in recklessness have dashed away the cup of joy from loving lips, or filled it with bitterness, with care and affliction. And then, alas! we cannot always give fresh delights for lost pleasures, cloudless serenity for past storms, and new treasures for the shattered wrecks which have been left behind. But some good we can accomplish by strenuous exertions; and to those who have suffered through us or on our account, we owe unwearied devotion to obliterate, not only the reality, but also the recollection of the sorrows and sufferings inflicted by our weakness or by our guilt.

The fifth duty demanded of us on this day of atonement, is that of forming the most solemn determination not to relapse into the errors of the

past, but to keep sedulously aloof from temptations in whatever shape they may assail us, to avoid moral danger, which is perhaps less courageous, though surely wiser and safer than to face it; but our conduct, in that respect, must be modified by the nature of our imperfections or good qualities. We should bring all the powers and energies of mind and soul into operation, and make them subservient to the one great object of penance, which means self-improvement and the exercise of benevolence and charity. Nor should we imagine, that having sinned once, we are more liable to sin again; on the contrary, shame, remorse, grief, those internal scourges, no less than outward punishments, are likely to prove strong weapons of defence against the most insidious tempters to evil, our own faults.

As a dangerous illness, when successfully vanquished, often restores us to more robust health, and enhances our gratitude for the blessings we possess; so past errors and their chastisement, while they frequently lead us to a truer appreciation of virtue, and of the importance of all duties, clearly define the shoals and reefs of our existence, and the great perils with which they are fraught. And when we behold before us vice and virtue, as from some commanding height we might see here the fearful, the unfathomed precipice, and there the peaceful valley, where labour

receives its reward, then our choice will not be doubtful ; for we are aware, that although weeds may, even in a well-tilled field, grow over night, there is hope to uproot them in the morning, and by perseverance to cleanse the land from rank vegetation. So let us guard against bewildering errors and illusions, and, with divine assistance, remove sin from our heart, ever upholding our will by fervid prayer for the work of true reformation.

We are further commanded to keep this day as a rigorous fast. My dear children, the injunction of abstaining from food applies to those only who have attained their thirteenth year ; nor is it intended for the sick or infirm, who might be seriously injured by obedience to this law. However, those exempted from the rule form but a small minority ; all other Israelites should cheerfully submit to the privation. Although it is, no doubt, the least important of the duties prescribed for this season of repentance, it teaches valuable lessons, and tends to curb that foolishly proud spirit, which is so often oblivious of its own nothingness. How humiliating is the thought, that all should be dependent for strength and energy upon a mere morsel of bread, or a draught of water. For as the feeble and perishable nature of the human body requires daily nourishment, the best and most energetic, no less than the

weakest and frailest, are all influenced and depressed by even the temporary absence of meat and drink. The fast is, indeed, a penance, though the slightest of all, while it continues ; but when it ceases, we become aware how much our powers of usefulness were impaired by it, and how utterly they would have been destroyed had our abstinence been prolonged.

Therefore, my dear children, this day, both a stern master and a wise teacher, awakens in us feelings of intense pity for the hungering multitudes, whose food is, alas ! insufficient to support them, who, perhaps, see their loved ones pine and droop from want, while the sons and daughters of luxury often partake of superfluous repasts. And it is impossible sincerely to commiserate the poor without striving to alleviate their sufferings, and without succeeding, to some extent, in such earnest endcavours.

God, who is the All-wise as well as the All-merciful, has vouchsafed to us the ordinance of the Day of Atonement ; and during its long vigils of contrition, our mistakes and imperfections, errors and sins, appear reproachfully, and in almost endless array, before our view, urging us on to confession at the throne of judgment, and to amelioration in our hearts and in our deeds. The Lord wishes His children to turn from their wicked ways, and to live again in happy innocence ; and

when His searching eye discerns true repentance, His heavenly hand lifts up from lowliness the crushed spirit, and bids the sorrowing soul, soothed by faith and purified by expiation, to rise again to the performance of the highest duties of life. Well may we then trust to our heavenly Father for the blessing of forgiveness, look around us with the serenity of peace on our countenance, and exclaim, with deep gratitude: "A day in Thy courts, O God, is better than a thousand."

XXIV.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

We celebrate a festival this day, in remembrance of the miraculous preservation of our ancestors, during the forty years of their wanderings and privations in the wilderness. Memories of events long gone by crowd upon us; and while, perhaps, oppressed by personal anxieties, and divided between painful thought and fervent prayer, we see before us the millions of human beings, who pitched their tents in the desert, and were sustained there by the inexhaustible goodness and infinite power of the Lord. His bounty fed them with celestial bread, sent the birds of the air to nourish them, allowed the hard rock to be cleft, that fresh waters might yield their streams to quench the burning thirst of fevered lips.

It was the same heavenly will that had shielded their helplessness, when they were flying from angry pursuers, and made a column of cloud appear by day to shroud them from all danger, a pillar of fire to glow by night, and illumine the

surrounding darkness ; it was the same invincible hand that fought and won their battles among idolatrous nations, causing the Israelites to be victorious over every enemy. And it is the recollection of all these mercies which gives additional solemnity to the days we are now keeping holy.

But in the times of Moses and his successors, the Feast of Tabernacles was one of gratitude and rejoicing, not merely for the great historical and national blessings, that saved and protected our forefathers during their long pilgrimage to the new home of promise, but also for the gifts of God's beneficence vouchsafed, in such rich abundance, to all His children during spring, summer, and autumn. The festival was observed from the fifteenth day of the month of Tishri, ere the season changed for winter, and in joyful acknowledgment of the treasures reaped at the close of the agricultural year, when the labours of the husbandman were concluded, when the orchards and vineyards, as well as the corn-fields, had given up their produce to persevering exertions, and when those who had tilled the ground were both rewarded for their work, and relieved from its fatigues. Every seventh year, when the land also was allowed to rest, the Law was read publicly in the assembly of the people, and the paramount duty thus inculcated was thankfulness,

which is indeed the fountain of the purest and deepest religious feelings.

Though many centuries have rolled by since the days of our greatest prophet, the wise and beautiful commandments which by the grace of the Omnipotent he was allowed to transmit to our ancestors, are still binding upon us, and will endure everlastingly, notwithstanding the manifold changes so constantly and so rapidly carried on around us.

The Almighty ordained : " You shall dwell in tabernacles seven days,... that your generations may know, that I made the children of Israel to dwell in tabernacles, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev.xxiii.42,43). And although we now inhabit substantial houses throughout the year, and are protected by them from the vicissitudes of all seasons, the wooden structures which we raise derive deep interest from their association, both with the remote Biblical times and with the glowing autumn, which, robed in purple and gold, journeys over the land to gather the rich gifts of the earth's luxuriant fertility. When the yellow corn has been bound into goodly sheaves, when the trees have been stripped of their gleaming fruit, when the vineyards have lost beauty and splendour, when the clear air rings with the merry harvest voices, when anxious mothers stoop to glean each stray

ear of wheat, while their children pluck the wild flowers of the furrow, and the birds come down from the blue ether, soon to fly back, bearing away their share of the wealth of fields and gardens, then it is impossible not to feel profoundly impressed with sentiments of gratitude towards the divine Giver of all blessings, and not cheerfully to help in building or adorning those fragile tabernacles, every portion of which is a remembrance of a benefit received, and points to the accomplishment of some duty.

I need hardly describe to you, my dear children, those temporary habitations; you have often seen them, and your hands have frequently assisted in embellishing them with the brightest foliage, with the loveliest flowers, with a roof of leaves through which the sun by day, and the stars by night, shine upon happy groups of parents and children, enjoying therein the favours of God's beneficence, and offering up to heaven the thanks and prayers of humbly grateful hearts.

Yet in addition to the garlands woven from the blossoms of our gardens, to the pyramids raised from the sweetest clusters, which ripen in our orchards, we are commanded, during the Feast of Tabernacles to symbolize the varied productions of nature by the four plants mentioned in Holy Writ, namely, the weeping willow of the brook,

under whose shade we find shelter and coolness, the evergreen myrtle of hope with its snowy buds of purity, the lemon, with its fragrant petals of promise and their fulfilment, and the finest branches of the palm tree, which yields all necessities and luxuries to the inhabitants of tropical climes.

But the tints of the fairest roses, however brilliant and beautiful, fade away almost before the festive season is replaced by the days of labour, and their fragrance, however balmy, soon evaporates; the green leaves droop; even the most powerful aroma vanishes ere long; the fruit loses its freshness; and while thoughtfully contemplating the silent but eloquent decay around us, wrought even in the course of one short week, we are again made to feel that all earthly treasures are evanescent; that the land may be impoverished, the vineyard blighted, the mines and quarries of the earth exhausted, the grandest palaces and noblest ships destroyed by flood and fire; that mighty rivers may lose themselves in the sandy waste, that nothing is permanently ours, but the heart-born faith in divine goodness, nothing everlasting, except the heavenly beneficence of the Almighty: and such knowledge, such belief, should always give fervour to our supplications, when we pray for the attributes of charity, of benevolence, of mercy, and of humility among

our brethren — of energy and courage among besetting dangers — of patience and perseverance for accomplishing our daily duties.

Prayer, when coming from the depths of the soul, is, indeed, an inexhaustible source of purification, peace, and solace. It must not be mechanical lip-worship, but an intensely thoughtful invocation, breathed to the Father of light and life, for power to save ourselves from folly and vanity, vice and sin — that prayer, offered up at the portals of morn and evening, of work and rest, when the sun gilds the mountain-tops at early hour, when the dying day-hymn floats through the rosy air, when twilight flings its veils and lulling harmonies around the weary earth; and again, when nature seems wrapt in slumber, and the moon's silvery wings hover over field and forest, city and village — that prayer relieves our breast from the burden of worldly cares, causes tranquillity to descend into our heart, and, with it, the clear and vivid consciousness of our manifold duties; and then it is that we feel the glowing hope, the ardent wish, the firm resolve to fulfil all our obligations devoutly and zealously. Let us strengthen ourselves in these good intentions by the precepts contained in the Holy Bible; and although the Law is no longer, as in former times, read every seventh year to the assembled people, may we still, in remembrance of that

custom, on the Feast of Tabernacles, which comes to us so brightly and so joyously, call to mind every commandment graciously vouchsafed by Almighty God.

While bowing down in ardent adoration before Him, we should more than ever think of the repeated prohibition against worshipping idols of mortal fashioning,—not of wood, or clay, or metal, of which there can scarcely be any apprehension in our days, but of placing any earthly aim, any worldly object, above and beyond the true reverence of God, in thought, word, or deed. Vanity, pride, avarice, egotism, envy, are in reality all worthless, hideous idols, which our follies and passions, alas! paint with deceptive colours, and exalt into high positions. Even ambition, the noble love of fame, and the legitimate love of power, may become dangerous and sinful, when not made subservient to religious sentiment, and to the promotion of the best interests of mankind.

On this great festival of gratitude, we ought also to bring prominently before us the respect due to our parents—a feeling which appears symbolical of the homage which we owe to God. It is impossible that, in striving to understand the spirit of the divine Law, we should serve the heavenly Creator zealously, without striving as constantly to honour our earthly father, to whom,

through the blessing of Providence, we are beholden for all advantages and enjoyments of life. The veneration towards parents enjoined in the Decalogue, has been placed as a connecting link between man's most sacred duties to the Almighty and those devolving upon him in the daily intercourse with his neighbours. The respectful affection for father and mother is not only commanded by the Lord, but is an innate sentiment developed in us far earlier than any other—it is the spring from which our best feelings are derived. Those capable of forgetting or neglecting the authors of their existence, whose devotion has watchfully guarded them, whose love has embellished their early and most helpless years, are not likely to remember at all times the invisible Creator, by whose divine will they first beheld the light of day, by whose beneficence they are sustained and protected. And those who are unmindful of the Almighty, and of their filial obligations, will hardly be kind and just when brought into contact with the world. An ungrateful, disobedient son will scarcely prove a good father, a warm-hearted brother, a zealous, trustworthy friend, a patriotic citizen, an active and useful member of the great human family.

Next to the solemn duties just referred to, the laws regarding widows and orphans, and all those who may be poverty-stricken or perhaps

strangers in the land of our birth, cannot be brought too often or too prominently before us. To the afflicted we owe consolation ; to the infirm, comfort ; to the feeble, support ; to all, the gentlest words of kindness, the best deeds of love.

But while we make every effort to share our most precious treasures with those who need them, we should not omit to give thanks to our benefactors ; and it appears impossible not to consider this duty as most binding and most important. And in offering humble acknowledgments to the Lord for life, and health, and all our faculties, we should not forget the friends who taught us to use these heavenly gifts ; the teachers, who unrolled the records of the past, solved enigmas, dispelled darkness for us by the light of their intelligence, assisted our understanding to see and to vanquish difficulties, or, perhaps, aided us to dive into the mysteries and secrets of art and science, initiated our inexperience into the most intricate of all labyrinths, that of the human mind, enabling us to comprehend the character of our fellow-beings, as well as our own power, and showing us, alas ! also our own frailty and infirmity of purpose. We should keep in faithful remembrance the guides and advisers of our youth, and yield to their service true and lasting gratitude. The development of this quality is peculiarly rewarding ; and it has been justly said, that the exercise of it, unlike the

performance of other virtues, is never painful nor difficult, but always easy and pleasing. Some persons, however, whose generosity of thought and feeling, word and deed, seems inexhaustible—who delight not merely in dispensing charity in the widest sense, but also in bestowing advantages and gifts upon all around them, do not possess a sufficient depth of sentiment to receive favours with a due sense of thankfulness, or to evince true estimation of the kindness which may have been bestowed upon them. This fault is to be seriously deplored. The genuine appreciation of all human excellence, as of all divine bounty, makes us more fully worthy of happiness, better able to enjoy it ourselves, and by our exertions and labours to diffuse it among others.

At this festive season, while surveying the countless treasures lavished upon us by divine Providence, while recalling to mind the ever-varying and ever-beauteous gifts of earth and heaven, while picturing to ourselves the delicate germs, the pale leaflets, the tender buds of early spring, the rich foliage, the brilliant blossoms, the golden sheaves of summer, while glancing around us at the luxuriant vintage of autumn, and looking forward with a sigh to the bleak winter months, let us bow down in humble thankfulness to Almighty God, recognizing in the year which now verges towards its end, a

symbol of our own existence, recollecting, however, that the winter of life need not necessarily be dreary. For, as in nature the produce of the early periods of the year, the corn, wine, and oil, are kept in granaries and cellars to nourish and sustain us during the cold season, to light our dwellings during dark nights, and blaze on the hearth while the north wind is raging at our door, so the good works of our busy days and their reward, the well-earned repose after exhausting struggles, the consciousness of having endeavoured to fulfil our obligations, and the benefits flowing from well-directed exertions, throw light and cheerfulness over our declining years, brightening the mind, and making the heart glow under the snows of winter.

But, my dear children, the spirit of the Eternal, which rests over the whole universe, the vivifying Word of God, is equally impressive at all times. It is directed to every human being; none are too young to receive it, none too old not to be strengthened and roused by it. Among our possessions it is the most precious, transcending all others in beauty, in value, in power of banishing fear and kindling hope, of mitigating affliction and bringing back security, of supporting us when we totter, of lifting us to sunny heights from the deepest abyss of despair. Let us, then, be sincerely and fervently grateful to Him, through whose

beneficence we live, to Him, who found us in a desert land, and in the howling wilderness, who led us with paternal hand, who instructed us, who kept us as the apple of His eye, and, in His boundless mercy, bearing us on eagles' wings, brought us to Himself.

XXV.

THE BREVITY OF LIFE.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

To the afflicted, who are bent low by the weight of suffering or of sorrow, to the weeping mourners, who have seen the grave close over those cherished most dearly, and valued as the very light and warmth of their own existence, the knowledge of the brevity of our earthly career may prove a solace and a comfort in the hour of trial and bereavement, as they look beyond the mysteries of the tomb for complete rest and an eternal reunion with their loved ones. However, no one can doubt, that the boundless beneficence of Almighty God has diffused throughout the world far more joy and sunshine than gloom and grief; and to those in possession of the blessings of health and vigour, to those who thoroughly prize the gifts of divine bounty, who are surrounded by devoted friends, by affectionate and dutiful children, who have few cares and anxieties, and always turn cheerfully and hopefully to the morrowing day, the idea of the shortness of life is

often depressing and painful. Many, therefore, among us either dwell upon it with feelings of anguish, or strive to banish it completely: but so much that may prove useful, so much that may contribute to the elevation of our thoughts, to the purity of our sentiments, to devotion, gentleness, and kindness, to piety and humility among our brethren, is to be derived from the calm contemplation of death and of the short span allotted to us upon earth, that it will benefit even the youngest among you to revert to some of those passages in the sacred Volume which allude to that absorbing subject.

“We spend our years as a tale that is told,” says the Psalmist (Ps. xc. 9), and it cannot be doubted, that there is great beauty, and deep, though not sad, truth in his speech. “Man’s days are like the grass of the field. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; and in the evening it is cut down and withereth” (Ps. xc. 6).

Nothing, my dear children, could impress you so truly with the transitory nature of our existence on earth as these words of the inspired poet—words echoed in our prayers on the solemn Day of Atonement, when conscience bids all our faults and failings appear in its unerring court of justice, and when, more than on any other day of the year, we humbly and anxiously pray to Almighty God to blot out our transgressions, and

to inscribe us in the book of life. It is then we say, that, "as the clay in the hand of the potter, as the stone in the hand of the mason, as the iron in the hand of the smith, as the rudder in the hand of the pilot, as the tapestry in the hand of the embroiderer, as the silver in the hand of the refiner, so are we in the hand of God": only we are more perishable than stone or iron, more like the flower that blooms in the early morning hour, and dies at eventide.

Yes, my dear children, "we spend our years as a tale that is told," and our life from that first and warmest cradle, our mother's arms, to the cold and narrow dwelling which the grave-digger prepares, is a mere pilgrimage, at the close of which the shadow of death extends between the green earth and our home beyond the confines of this world, in that better land promised to the just and good. But this fair and bright promise should not make us undervalue the utility of the way, though it may well diminish our awe at the dark valley, which separates time from eternity. The brevity of our existence here should render every hour doubly precious, should make us more anxious to extract great and lasting benefits from every moment, should cause us to look upon life as eager travellers contemplate a journey. They are always mindful of their home, and never lose sight of it, but become better able to appreciate

its blessings on their return, and more truly qualified to enjoy them; they move on, acquiring information at every step, improving their knowledge on every road, climbing every mountain pass, reading zealously in the great book of nature, and studying earnestly every page of the volume of life. They seek balmy air, invigorating sea-breezes, soothing waters, healing springs, to recruit health and strength. They leave nothing unvisited, unseen, unnoticed, unaccomplished. Paintings, the achievements of men of immortal genius, curiosities, relics of olden times, architectural beauties, splendours of nature and art, antiquities and modern wonders, the trophies of the past, the conquests of civilization and the evidence of progress in the present century, the manners and customs of individuals and of whole nations, arrest their attention and occupy their powers of observation. Those wise and happy travellers do not sigh in sadness over their journey, because it is to be short, but try to profit by every hour of their wanderings, to derive moral and intellectual benefit, to reap experience from their peregrinations, that they may come back to their own hearths with delightful recollections and treasures of human lore—treasures intended not merely for their own enjoyment, but also for the improvement of those who cluster round their fireside, and perhaps even for the advantage of wider circles.

Thus let us travel along our earthly way, let every hour be deemed an inestimable boon, made to embellish the day with patient studies, with useful labours, with good deeds, with acts of kindness and of charity. You may think, my dear children, that such exertions are not at all times possible, and that the journey of life, bright and smiling, perhaps, when we set out, and leading us among sunny and flowery paths, where the accomplishment of duty is both easy and pleasureable, often becomes dismal and rugged, and even dangerous, as we advance. It is true, that we cannot move a step on land, or sail a knot at sea, or be whirled along by the steam horse, without exposing ourselves to accidents and perils; and just so is the journey from birth to death beset with great dangers for the mind, the heart, and the soul. But, as we trust in God's mercy to shield us from harm when, on a brief excursion, we leave the sheltering roof to which we hope to return, so let us trust to His divine goodness throughout our pilgrimage. Let us strengthen ourselves by ardent faith in His beneficent power, and exert our faculties to resist temptation and overcome evil, to assist others by the force of word, deed, and example, so that every day, which brings us nearer to that heavenly home, the abode of the righteous, may make us more worthy of enjoying its unceasing felicity. Let us travel on,

vanquishing difficulties and avoiding snares, or, armed with hope and courage, braving them ; then we may at the same time consider ourselves successful pioneers, and truly feel, that we have made the chequered journey easier for those who come after us, and to whom "our footprints on the sands of time" may be landmarks in the wilderness.

It is true, our life passes like the recital of a tale ; but, my dear children, that narrative, though brief, may and ought to be fraught with interest to all around us. It should be more attractive by far than the most soul-stirring among the works of fiction, which, rendered captivating by the spell of genius, often kindle enthusiasm, and fill the admiring reader with an ardent longing to emulate the deeds of virtue and of valour chronicled in the glowing pages of the book.

"We spend our years like a tale that is told." Let every line of it be pervaded by noble aspirations, so that our friends and kindred, and those who cling to us in their inexperience, or in the strength of their affection, and all who are brought within the circle of our activity, may be influenced by the history of our trials and labours, of our sufferings and rewards, of our struggles and achievements.

We are travellers ; let those who trace in our looks and in our acts the account of the peregrin-

ation, mark the perseverance that never grows weary nor footsore, that, wounded perhaps by the thistles, hurt by the lacerating thorns of the hedgerows, toils on, nevertheless, calmly clearing the way for those who follow, grasping nettles with a firm hand, uprooting weeds, and, like a good gardener, bidding roses bloom where tares luxuriated in idle profusion. Then may those who can see how our days roll by, or who view the picture of our journey, take heed of the indefatigable activity, the radiant hope, the deep faith, and the fervid zeal, which sustain the existence of the pilgrims until they reach the promised shrine.

We are like mariners. Let those who follow us with wistful eyes, or consult the log-book, notice the course of our ship as we sail over the ocean of time to the haven of immortality. With religion for our compass, we cannot lose our track on the high seas ; with the blessing of God upon our exertions, we may hope to avoid shoals and quicksands, and to steer clear of threatening rocks ; and although, in the course of our voyages, we may occasionally be ice-bound by the freezing coldness of the world, or storm-tossed by the fury of angry passions, we need never fear ; reliance on God's mercy will strengthen us, when all earthly means of help and deliverance seem far beyond our reach.

The progress of our life may disclose vicissitudes

and disappointments, cares and afflictions: but how great is the value, how deep the interest of such changes for those who read attentively and remember faithfully! If the smiles of fortune and the frowns of adversity left us equally tranquil; if in prosperity we remained mindful of the higher duties of life; if distress did not cloud the nobler qualities of our nature, but allowed them to shine forth with undimmed lustre; if the minor annoyances of every day and every hour did not ruffle our calmness, nor harassing anxieties exhaust our patient endurance; if our own trials and the sorrows of those around us found our courage unflinching in the discharge of duty, and permitted us to be humbly resigned to the inscrutable decrees of divine Providence; if we endeavoured to lighten the burden of foreign affliction, whether of bodily torture or mental agony, by unwearied devotion or ardent self-sacrifice; then surely the years spent like a tale that is told become not only the best preparation for the blessings of eternal life, but even in this world they are the noblest legacy, the most precious inheritance we can bequeath to our friends.

We may be said to resemble the flower that flourishes at early morning and dies at eventide, but whose fragrance lingers in the air. We fade away, but our good deeds are imperishable, not emblazoned, perhaps, in the records of history,

but fondly remembered by those who knew and loved us. Handed down by them to their children, they become lessons for the young ; and if the short time assigned to us be well employed in the gentle and conscientious fulfilment of the duties demanded by the beneficent laws of Almighty God, then it surely finds an echo in every breast, awakening sympathy and hope, strengthening courage, inclining wavering hearts to cherish the best feelings of humanity, and to carry out into practice the highest dictates of boundless love and merciful charity.

My dear children, let us ardently pray, that the blessing of the Lord may descend upon us when we strive to obey His behests ; and then, however brief our passage through the valleys of earth, we may hope to enter the world of uninterrupted peace, well content to have passed our years in this life like a tale that is told.

XXVI.

ON ENERGY.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

All human beings, whatever their age and their position in the world, whether distinguished by acquirements or living in ignorance, whether blessed with wealth or oppressed by poverty, all shrink alike from corporeal pain, from suffering of the mind, from sorrow of the heart; all, however they may differ in many respects, or in every internal and external qualification, are agreed on one point—all seek happiness. The most selfish and the most self-sacrificing, the most thoughtful and the most thoughtless, shudder when brought into contact with the picture or the reality of trials and anxieties. The greatest philosophers, and the most truly benevolent of human beings, have in their best writings and deeds cherished one noble and beautiful aim—the widest extension of prosperity and happiness on earth. When we look around us, whether to the labours of agriculture, the toil and moil in manufacturing districts, the

subterranean activity pursued in mines, the ceaseless extension of commerce, the operations of finance, the works of architecture; when we see new roads and docks and harbours, new schools and colleges, hospitals and charities innumerable, spring up on every side; when we worship in the temples of the Lord, raised everywhere by pious hands for the glorification of His holy name—we cannot doubt, that the extension and enjoyment of felicity form the universal aspiration of all men, kindled in the soul by the will of Almighty God, who created the world, and filled it with all its dazzling wonders.

But although from the first waking hour to the last sleep of death, we long for joy and gladness, we are apt to forget, that these boons must be earned by our conduct, by our faithful obedience to all divine commands—by that unconditional submission to the eternal will, which robs even mental torture and physical agony of their sharpest pangs. Yes, my dear children, in our pilgrimage towards happiness, we frequently neglect, or even entirely overlook, its greatest and purest source—the fulfilment of duty. Let me remind you of it to-day, in the inspired words of the “Preacher,” and say to each of you: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

It is perfectly evident, that there is much activity, as well as the accomplishment of many

obligations, demanded from us all. You are called upon even in earliest childhood to be affectionately diligent, to minister to the satisfaction of father and mother, by undeviating attention, if possible, to every lesson their scanty leisure may enable them to give you, or to the teaching which they allow you to receive at school; for you well know, my dear young friends, how great, though necessary a sacrifice of material advantages your parents often make, when, instead of employing your intelligence and activity at home, where you might become useful to them in a thousand ways, they send you forth, at the cost of much additional labour on their own part, to acquire information, and fit yourselves, by studious zeal, for the duties of your career. And if you are blessed hereafter with children, should they be feeble or unfortunately sickly, your hand will find much to do, that they may be strengthened, and surrounded with every assistance to screen their helplessness, to aid their struggle with invading illness; if, on the contrary, rosy health be their companion, and anxious watchfulness by day and exhausting vigils by night do not absorb your faculties, then you will constantly be required to show your sons and daughters what is right, to guide their steps along the path of virtue, to develop all the qualities which bounteous Providence may have vouchsafed to them, to give them your

thought and your treasures of experience, for even the lowliest, most uniform mode of life enriches our memory with stores of practical knowledge.

If you have brothers and sisters, your hand will soon discover how it can aid and serve them with words of encouragement and of comfort, with helpful deed, with judicious example; if you are so fortunate as to possess devoted friends, if you gratefully acknowledge generous benefactors, you will soon know what can be done to promote their satisfaction, to establish or enhance their happiness. And then, without expecting rewards, the greatest of all recompenses will be yours—the consciousness of having endeavoured to achieve with your might all the work placed within reach of your hands, be it mere labour of love, or hard, harassing toil; that conviction will yield to your humble but earnest efforts the purest felicity, which Almighty God, in His boundless beneficence, allows human beings to taste, and after which He has taught us to yearn incessantly.

But if the Lord should have given you parents, brothers, sisters, benefactors, and friends, and on looking back through a long vista of years, you find that, through indolence or recklessness, you failed to support them in hours of weakness, to tend them when sickness crossed their threshold, to love them, to honour them, to serve them, then the recollection of having possessed such

blessings, and of having neglected such duties, will be a source of eternal reproaches to you, instead of undying joys. You will have no parents to bless you, no friends to cheer you, no well-wishers to strew flowers on your road, no brothers to lean upon and confide in, no sisters listening with eager attention to the expression of all your fond hopes and fervid aims—nothing but a wasted existence overshadowed by endless regrets.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,” says our text, and nothing can be clearer or simpler; though it must be admitted, that our manifold imperfections often interfere with the strict and patient fulfilment of the Biblical precept. It may perhaps be occasionally objected by the unreflecting, that not all hands find work to do, and that even when it appears ready, there is deficiency of might to accomplish it. But surely that is a mistake, my dear children. There is never any lack of labour in this busy world, nor is the power to execute it ever wanting, though, unfortunately, the inclination often fails. We have teachers innumerable to point out our task, and the means of performing it. Does not the eye, that wondrous mirror, which takes in both the countless beauties of creation, and the blemishes with which the carelessness of man has disfigured this earth, show us the work still to be done? Does not the ear,

that great instructor, convey to the mind and heart many impressions of the necessities and requirements of those around us? Do not even touch and taste and odour tell us what to seek, to avoid, or to banish for ourselves, or for those who depend on our exertions? Some have wealth at their command; others, talent and opportunities; others again, time, which, with its manifold lessons, is in itself a mine of untold riches.

Do not think, my dear children, that by "might" is meant illustrious birth or eminence of position, or fame, dazzling powers of intellect, transcendent genius, vast influence, or money, or even thews and sinews. The word "might" comprises numberless ways and means of carrying out the labour of life; and, believe me, both those who are gifted with quickness, and those who plod on slowly, may hope to reach the goal. But, then, you must not let shallow praise mislead your efforts, or equally superficial blame check your career of attempted usefulness; but, in order to insure success, you ought to keep the one paramount object of utility steadfastly in view, and also to retain in faithful memory, that God, in His boundless beneficence, allows all human beings to achieve with their might whatever their hands may find to effect. Indeed, our faculties, though limited in extent, are endless in variety. If powers of imagination are all-sufficient to call into brilliant

existence so much that remains imperishably lovely and fascinating in the realms of fiction and in the domain of art, surely the enthusiasm of the soul, with its sublime aspirations, its high-soaring hopes, may and does frequently become the originator of great and good works, which without the fervid organization that conceived them, would never have been undertaken or even thought of.

Such depth of feeling, when it flings itself into the realities of life, is ever undaunted by difficulties which might well appal colder natures—but minor details often escape the attention of creative genius—and then comes zeal, which probably unable to plan such noble deeds, fans them with the warm breath of its own ardour, with its ever-burning flame kindling other fires, and casting its halo over perhaps monotonous, dreary, or even irksome labours. Or when glowing enthusiasm has projected new and great works, and eager zeal is ready and anxious to bid them good speed, talent may be required to elaborate them, to adapt them skilfully to the needs of the times and of the people, to insure their completeness, to free them, as far as human knowledge will permit, of blemishes, to prevent shortcomings; and when talent has exhausted its conceptions and suggestions, then strength of will, firmness of purpose, unwavering tenacity and rock-like energy, are wanted to give efficacy, and power; later still,

indefatigable activity, unflagging industry, and the diligent, daily survey of all details, may become needful; and uninterrupted perseverance, or the meekest patience, and the faculty of constant endurance are all alike demanded for the varying tasks of this world.

It is very seldom indeed, probably never, the case, my dear children, that such qualities are found united in one person; but all human beings enjoy some peculiar advantages of mental and moral organization or of bodily disposition, which enable them to exert themselves usefully, and to accomplish with their own might whatever their hand findeth to do; and so beneficently has the Creator framed us, both intellectually and corporeally, that the duties we have to fulfil are such as our powers can well compass. All that is required from us, is to make good use of our might; for it is scarcely possible to overlook the work ready for our hands. And let us remember, that qualities are many-sided; that what often appears an advantage sometimes becomes a drawback to our utility, while peculiarities of organization, which are deplored as being likely to hamper our progress, and make it impossible, are not unfrequently the origin and cause of our success. For instance, those gifted with rapidity of ideas, with facility of execution, with fluency of speech, with great readiness, as evinced in commencing and finishing

any work, be it of the pen or the pencil, are often deficient in depth of thought, unable or unwilling to exert that incessant care and unremitting attention which alone lead to excellence ; whereas persons fettered, as it were, by natural difficulty in expressing their views, in achieving any work confided to them, either by want of promptitude in all they undertake, or by inborn tardiness of appropriate words, often learn to mature their thoughts, to give them correctness, clearness, strength to withstand attacks from without, to make their value appreciated, and to endue them both with vastness and elevation ; though their process of reasoning be slow, as they proceed along they weigh the evolved arguments in the balance ; whatever is futile and flimsy is rejected, what is truly valuable is retained and classified ; the intense toil required is not thrown away, and all the deeds of such calmly moving lips, or quietly and indefatigably acting hands, become more perfect, in consequence of the extreme travail that precedes their birth.

Thus he who works with difficulty, instead of looking upon his slowness as an impediment, should derive from it the comfort, that nature has allotted to him time—one of her most precious gifts—for deep study and the conscientious elaboration of all sterling pursuits : while those endowed with rapidity of conception and execution should

not hurry through their task, and then remain inactive; but they should, on the contrary, consider, that from such facility as has fallen to their share, innumerable services to individuals and to society in general are constantly expected. This is their might, and they should wield it for the benefit of all.

And remember, my dear children, how great is the sin, how great the loss of leaving the powers graciously vouchsafed to you uncultivated and unused. Who ever possessed quarries of granite or marble, and left them unworked? fields of gold, mines of silver or of precious gems, and allowed them to remain unexplored? or broad acres, which might yield splendid harvests, or be transformed into orchards and vineyards, and permitted them to lie always fallow, covered only with tares and weeds? Or would not any person hoarding up during his whole lifetime bags of money, and denying himself and others all but the bare necessities of existence, most assuredly be stigmatized as a short-sighted miser? Yet such people do less harm, undoubtedly, than those who lead a useless life, letting their inborn faculties slumber, or become entirely dwarfed by inaction. After years of neglect, the same pearls, if sought for, will be found in the sea, the same diamonds in the mine, and the land, if then cultivated, will bring forth its wheat-sheaves, its generous wine,

its oil, or its fruit; while the descendants of the niggardly man may even be doubly rich owing to the parsimonious habits of the deceased. But he who neglects the opportunities of accomplishing with his might whatever his hand findeth to do, of developing his powers and his energies, becomes a prey to incurable regret, to uncontrollable self-reproach, to ever-stinging remorse; he wastes entirely and irretrievably the treasures which were bounteously placed within his reach.

I shall probably be told by the struggling, by the hard-working, that not all labour is rewarded with success; that failure is, if not quite annihilating, most disheartening; that it often leads to disenchantment, to overpowering lassitude, to the abandonment of all efforts: but should it be so? Ought we not to keep in vivid recollection, that even partial success, though perhaps unsatisfactory to the individual, is a great gain, while entire failure is often a lesson, and though it be a violent blow at the time, yet it may with more truth be compared to a sudden flash of lightning, rending some mysterious veil, clearing away mists and clouds and phantoms; for it shows, in addition to what cannot be achieved, that which may really be done, just as the fantastic and apparently useless study of alchemy and astrology, led thinking men gradually on to make marvellous discoveries in the useful and important sciences of chemistry and astronomy.

And, in conclusion, let me repeat once more, and beg you to take to heart, my dear children, that there is work for all hands, as well as the might to accomplish it. Yes, my young friends, it is to be found in a home of poverty; it may be achieved from a bed of sickness, and even by sufferers who are unable to quit the fireside, by the lame, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and those unfortunately paralysed; for often, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, when one sense is impaired, the others acquire more strength and acuteness: and as the Almighty always bountifully awards compensation for all ills, so the invalid, far removed from the noise of the world, shows his might by good example of gentleness, of patience, of humility, of care, and thoughtfulness—powers which may be unrevealed to many, until taught to them by a force more irresistible than that of precept.

Let us always be striving to prove useful, while we remember, that whenever our hand findeth work, the capacity for performing it will not abandon us. As guides on earth, we have our conscience and the Book of Books; and in heaven, Almighty God, who hath said: “I will instruct thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye”; to which, my dear children, let us add, in the words of the Psalmist, and still in the anxious pursuit of happiness: “O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.”

XXVII.

MERCY AND TRUTH.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

You have already been taught, that, so far as we are personally concerned, every departure from truth is a dangerous step, leading us, alas ! rapidly and inevitably into a labyrinth, from the intricate windings of which it is at all times difficult, and often impossible, to disentangle ourselves. And as regards our position among our brethren on earth, we should, indeed, live in darkness and act indiscriminately, did not truth shed its pure and gentle ray around us. Unaided by its unwavering light, we could not hope to form a right estimate of the character of others ; unassisted by all-searching and all-seeing truth, we should be constantly misled, falling into grievous mistakes, into painful and cruel injustice. But, on the other hand, without mercy, which is indulgence to the weak and commiseration for their errors, forgiveness to the sinful, and help to the fallen, the fountain of our sympathies would soon dry up. Therefore, says King Solomon in his

Proverbs: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart"—the one to teach and to guide; the other, to pardon and to soothe, to sustain and to heal. We must, alas! see the whole extent of the fault, and even witness the anguish of the offender, know his anxiety for relief and his utter helplessness; we must probe the depth of the evil, ascertain the weakness, or the fictitious strength of the sinner, ere our mercy can exercise a lasting, or even a temporary influence for good.

Truth and mercy linked together are, indeed, invaluable treasures; they bless not merely their possessor, but, while showering blessings over wide-extending circles, are among the most powerful instruments for banishing from the world much evil and misery, for diffusing light and imparting knowledge, and for restoring long-absent, perhaps long-relinquished, happiness. Truth, which is justice, if unaccompanied by mercy, would be or appear cold, severe, or even harsh; it would show us clearly, glaringly perhaps, the sad and afflicting scenes with which this world abounds; such dismal pictures, and the painful revelation of so many stern, harrowing realities, might either hopelessly discourage, or gradually harden many, unless mercy stepped in with her healing balsam and her cordials to soften our feelings, to strengthen our belief, and to raise our faith in the wondrous

power wielded by those who strive to free themselves from anger and prejudice, and with a loving, earnest heart, endeavour to forget wrongs, or rather, try to remember that even the best among us stand in need of great, of almost constant indulgence. However fearful and appalling the sights and sounds may be, which truth unveils and records, never let us turn away from them in wrath or in despair. When help is needed, we must fully know all that is wanted, examine the wounds resolutely, yet tenderly, as would a skilful surgeon, and not act like the empiric, who pretends to cure all ills and pains and sufferings by the mere exhibition of some marvellous nostrum.

But to say: "You are forgiven, you are acquitted, leave the haunts of error for the bright paths of virtue," is not enough. We must labour incessantly and conscientiously with word and deed, directed by thought and feeling, to achieve the arduous work of amelioration.

"Bind mercy and truth about thy neck," says our text. My dear children, let no one doubt that you are merciful and truth-loving; but remember, that the words of the wise monarch apply to these virtues alone. With regard to any other qualities in our possession, though they may prove real blessings to us in the pilgrimage through life, it would be wrong to make of them an idle show or a vain-glorious parade. Patience would seem

more like impatience if perpetually dwelt upon in our speech ; self-denial and even self-sacrifice would resemble selfishness if made prominent in our discourses ; our charity, if permitted to become the theme of exultation by ourselves, would soon be transformed into a most offensive and even wounding lack of generosity ; our piety, if boasted of, would be an intolerable assumption of self-righteousness and of superiority. But we may well adorn ourselves in the eyes of all mankind with mercy and truth ; for, although they are most beautiful and precious gems, in the opinion of the world mercy means nought but indulgence, fellow-feeling, and sympathy—sentiments so natural and so essential, that their supposed absence would justly make us hated or shunned : and as for truth, it must ever be deemed indispensable, since it is no more than honesty.

How often, alas ! are weakness and folly, sin and vice, repelled by the unmerciful, or spurned by the haughty ; how often are they flung back into their old dark abodes to remain for ever feeble and deluded, wretched and guilty ; whereas, weary of their tortuous, slippery ways, they seem to require only the soft touch of mercy's hand, guided by the flaming torch of truth, to be led back to virtue and to happiness.

We must learn to look upon folly, sin, and vice, as fearful but not incurable ailments of the heart

and mind. With so infallible an adviser as clear-sighted sincerity, and so powerful a remedy as gentle compassion, we may hope to dispel most evils, and to effect the cure of afflicted patients. Let ours be the healing art for the bleeding soul, and may experience and success heighten our zeal and increase our energies, while we ever recollect, that no useful knowledge of human sin and suffering, of human remorse and contrition, can long remain concealed from the unwearied investigation of a really truth-seeking mind, and that indulgence is a good and blessed angel, heaven-born and heaven-sent, to strengthen our anxious though humble endeavours, and give efficiency to the dutiful work of our feeble hands.

“Write mercy and truth upon the table of thine heart.” The royal philosopher no doubt meant, that we should become thoroughly imbued with those ennobling attributes, that they should form a part of our existence and of our life-blood ! The admirable beauty of truthfulness is perfectly evident even to the young and untutored mind ; yet unfortunately many turn away from it. And there is especially a departure from veracity, which perhaps at first does not strongly repel us, but is, nevertheless, an insidiously baneful form of falsehood. It is affectation. A trifling fault it may sometimes be deemed, for it seems to deal entirely with externals, and to leave the vital

qualities and the higher characteristics untouched and unharmed. It is the display of something in look, in gait, in manner, or in word, that does not belong to us, that is foreign to our thoughts and feelings, to our real nature, to our mental and bodily organization. It is the expression of something that does not exist in our breast, but that has perhaps been admired by us in living friends, or in a being of ideal perfection. It may be called the peacock's gorgeous plumage worn by the jay, a bright but borrowed garment, a pretty mask to hide an ugly face, a mere comedy, a foolish but harmless habit. Yet let us be watchful and severe, lest the absurdity should degenerate into all that is disingenuous, false, hollow, and hateful—into base hypocrisy. Having indulged the fancy of performing a mere player's part, many soon find it easier to appear good than to be so, and, ere long, they delude themselves into the belief, that hidden faults and sins, cloaked and closely covered by apparent virtues, cannot be sins at all.

The harm done by hypocrisy is incalculable; confidence is obtained and abused, and when, sooner or later, the impostor and his repulsive features are revealed, the faith of those around him in all that is good and wise and noble, is in danger of becoming much weakened and shaken;

but the miserable dissembler is completely ruined by the discovery of his baseness ; the very ground seems to give way under his feet ; he has no prop, no stay, no support left. He has been so deceitful, that he can trust no one, and has nearly lost all faith in that blessed mercy for which he dares not hope.

My dear children, let us indeed inscribe mercy, nay, engrave it on the core of our heart, and always faithfully and vividly recollect, that, however vigilant and truth-seeking we may be, it is impossible for us to see all the dangers and temptations which have led others into error ; for we cannot know the mental or moral weakness that has fallen a prey to wiles and snares perhaps innumerable. Some may have struggled long and resolutely against the power of evil example, and have yet been vanquished in the end. Dangerous associates, adverse circumstances, may have encompassed the best disposed ; while experienced friends and judicious advisers were far away, and that early training, which might perhaps have been a safeguard in the hour of peril, was entirely absent, or had become obliterated by the uncontrollable force of events.

But it would take far too long, my dear children, to dwell upon all the stern facts, all the painful surmises that should incline our under-

standing and our feelings towards the duties of compassion and clemency. We can hardly fail to be merciful if truth be our guide, and if, with its help, we look into every recess of our own heart, and bid conscience speak, and tell its sad, humiliating tale of faults repressed but not uprooted, of ever-recurring errors, of unavailing because feeble efforts for improvement, of bitter self-reproaches, of unredeemed pledges, of broken vows.

And here let me tell you, my dear children, that the anxious, severe, and constant examination of our thoughts and feelings, our motives and actions, is the only species of egotism which we may safely practise ; for while it tends to our own amelioration, it must make us indulgent towards our fellow-travellers along the road of life. And surely we, who stand so much in need of forbearance, who are forgiven by Almighty God, not once, but thousands of times, should we not learn to be merciful towards others, while we remember with fervid gratitude, that the Eternal created us in His own image, and that our immortal soul, which alone bears a stamp of resemblance to the Omnipotent, should worship Him in truth and in humility, by obeying His divine commandments, by extending sympathy and compassion to the erring, and thus, in faint and feeble, human and

imperfect, yet earnest and anxious imitation of the inexhaustible goodness and infinite mercy which we adore, lead us trustful and zealous, with our humble efforts, through the valley of the shadow of death to the throne of the Lord, still ardently craving indulgence and forgiveness.

XXVIII.

THE REPROOF OF LIFE.

MY DEAR CHILDREN.

You have often heard, that knowledge, which is far above rubies, more precious and infinitely more useful than the brightest jewels, cannot be bought; but that it may be acquired and imparted, and that, however generously and lavishly bestowed, it never impoverishes the donor, nor, like the gift of silver and gold, ever humiliates even the proudest recipient. There are various ways of acquiring the highest and most valuable information; indeed, we find it at every step among the enchanting beauties and wonders of creation, in every page of the divine Volume, where inspired words of immortal power trace out the whole circle of our duties: we derive worldly lore from the writings which the good and great of all centuries have bequeathed to posterity; and when, in communion with ourselves, we consult conscience, that unerring monitor reveals to us many truths which lie hidden in the labyrinths of the soul, and in the depths of the mind. To the

sincere inquirer most studies become ever-flowing sources of unmixed enjoyment and satisfaction; while others, though leading to our improvement, are deemed not sweet waters to be eagerly sought, but bitter and repelling draughts. It is towards them that it will be well to direct our attention.

When we find ourselves brought into contact with the world, we often meet with rebukes, which grate and jar upon us; but they, too, convey knowledge: let us submit to their irritating clamour, while we remember, that, as King Solomon says, "the ear which heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise." My dear children, let us endeavour to understand the full meaning of these words. All are reprov'd in the course of their pilgrimage, almost from the first movement upon which they venture in earliest infancy to the last act, which closes their labours on earth; but all do not heed, all do not hearken: some turn a deaf ear to expressions of blame, others are indifferent or callous, or, if not really so, strive to harden themselves against censure. The wise are those who never turn away from it in a careless, frivolous mood, or in a stubborn, angry spirit.

The reproof administered to us in tender childhood is perhaps the best, and should be the most beneficial. It comes from affectionate friends, from loving hearts, and, however unwelcome it

may sometimes be, is the expression of watchful care and deep anxiety for our happiness, of unflinching devotion to the best interests of our life. Therefore, my dear children, be entreated and warned always to listen with patient attention to reproving exhortation, even if it should appear to you undeserved, undue severity. You may have given offence unwittingly, or neglected some duty, without being aware of the full extent of your fault. Do not rebel against the admonition, which, in ignorance, or in a moment of wounded vanity, you will perhaps consider mere angry scolding. Without the strictures of your well-wishers and of life, you might never know your failings until too late, and they would possibly grow and become the bane of your whole existence, poison your otherwise happiest and most joyous years, and thus subject you to perpetual inward torments: for even when subdued by a strong will, even when controlled and concealed from all eyes by your determination of suffering in silence, the ugly enemies which have taken possession of your soul would remain scourges, and go on inflicting upon you endless flagellations.

The father who upbraids you, my dear children, is impelled to do so by his anxious consideration for your welfare. He is well aware that you cannot be happy without being good; he points out to you errors and failings and shortcomings, that

every onward step you undertake may be made easier; for our faults are troublesome travelling companions; they check our progress, they hinder every stride in the right direction: while our qualities, on the contrary, are the best and most energetic assistants; they help us to surmount difficulties, to annihilate obstacles, and to elude or conquer dangers.

The mother who chides you, is urged to do so by the depth, by the tenderness of her love. In her eagerness to shield you from peril, to place a safeguard around you, she feels, that her maternal watchfulness, though incessant, that the devotion of every moment of her existence, that the ardent prayers she offers up to Almighty God, that the blessings she invokes upon you, are insufficient to protect you from harm; for she remembers, that our heavenly Creator has graciously willed, that all happiness shall be the reward of merit, the recompense of the humble and conscientious exercise of those virtues which enhance the radiance of the sunniest hours, and allow us to bear up against the most fearful storms.

In order to be strong in the time of danger, you must be entirely truthful and truth-loving, never allow illusions, however brilliant and fascinating, to surround you, my dear young friends, but learn to banish besieging flattery; you must especially be warned against the weird sisters,

pride and vanity, who would lead you on to over-rate yourselves and to undervalue others; they are mere varieties of self-adoration, of egotism, which is, believe me, a most hideous idol. It is like Moloch, to whom the fairest children were sacrificed, for it swallows up every bloom and blossom, every hope of excellence, every amiable quality, every noble feeling.

If selfishness has been dwelt upon at some length to-day, it is because the development of that fatal fault takes place early in life, and is among the most prominent defects of heedless youth.

The young, having few cares and anxieties, most frequently allow all their thoughts and wishes to revert to themselves, and being thus in perpetual danger of becoming egotists, should indeed hearken to the warning voice of watchful love. My dear children, although kind and gentle advice given to the young may be particularly useful in saving them from much sorrow, it must not be imagined that the reproof of life is meant merely for those still enjoying the early morn of their existence. At all times, and under all circumstances, it reaches us; but only the thoughtful, who attend to its lessons, and make good use of them, abide among the wise. Let not the neglect of our claims, when we fancied ourselves entitled to the notice, perhaps to the approbation of the world,

let not that neglect, even when unmerited, depress us, or make us torpid. It should, on the contrary, spur us on to long-sustained and more vigorous exertions, to conscientious studies, to indefatigable perseverance, while we strengthen ourselves in our good resolves by the thought, that great and immediate success might have elated us too much, dazzled us with regard to our position, and blinded us as to our imperfections and shortcomings. The harsh criticism and cold severity of the world show us our errors, which we are apt to overlook, not necessarily from any undue conceit, but in the mere eagerness of our onward progress. In the battle of life, as in a game of chess, we discover almost at a glance, the weakness of our antagonist: but, alas! we do not perceive our own; or we discern it only when it is too late to fortify ourselves against danger. Therefore, my dear children, do not turn away from even harsh rebuke, which places our faults in an unmitigated glare of light. It may be humiliating to see them in their deformity; but when disclosed to us in their unsightly nakedness, we shrink from the fellowship in dismay; and then it is, that we think earnestly of placing a barrier between them and our better nature; then it is, that we may really hope to succeed in our strenuous endeavours.

Remember, my dear children, that even the

most conscientious cannot be sufficiently watchful over their actions, their thoughts, their impulses, and feelings. We are often made giddy and bewildered by conflicting emotions in the hurry of our journey to some wished-for goal. It is rebuke that frequently clears away all mists and deluding phantoms, that acts as a check in our headlong career. Then the annals of the past, with their perhaps long-forgotten or neglected lessons, reappear to us written in letters of fire; and then we vow, that the flaming torch of experience shall guide us henceforward, and that the time still vouchsafed to us shall be more usefully spent than that which has passed away.

In our unrestrained vehemence, in our breathless eagerness, we often arrive too early, and have to wait countless hours for the fulfilment of our heart's desire, for the realization of our hopes; or we may be sluggards, wasting or trifling away our opportunities, deferring to the morrow the performance of duty which belongs to every fleeting hour, and then we come too late; the prize for which we have been longing eludes our grasp, and the disappointment is great. But there is scarcely a disappointment which is not at the same time a lesson, which does not single out for our instruction some of our faults, and does not make us more clear-sighted and more vigilant. Let us derive the best use from such teaching, and turn it into the beauteous pearls of knowledge.

To know much, not merely by theory, but by the irresistible force of experience, is to be wise, which signifies to be good. It seems impossible to understand God's admirable commandments, and those divine and immutable laws, which award external or internal recompense to real merit, public or unseen punishment to every transgression, without humbly though ardently striving to obey our heavenly Father's will.

But we never can be sufficiently grateful to the Lord for the innumerable blessings He showers down upon us. We may know the obligations of gratitude, but we do not feel all their beneficent power until we have heard the reproof of life. Health, for instance, is a blessing, the priceless value of which becomes a thousand times greater after illness. Those who have long been tortured by bodily pain, chained to a bed of sickness, or imprisoned between the narrow boundaries of an arm-chair, come out with unspeakable delight, after a weary time of suffering, into the golden sunshine, that flings its glow and brightness around, into the cooling air, that fans us with fragrant wing, into the fields and woods, harmonious with hymns of gladsome birds. It is then, that our heart, overflowing with thankfulness to the merciful Creator, warms also towards our fellow-beings, that we learn to sympathize more truly with them, and endeavour to give them

all that human help and solicitude can bestow. To know what we have possessed and lost, what we have regained or may reconquer, by the loving-kindness of God and our most unremitting efforts, is to be wise.

Yes, my dear children, wisdom leads to goodness; many err and sin from ignorance, and need, alas! the censure of the world to turn from evil or dangerous ways. Not only real trials and sorrows, which chasten us, and detach our thoughts and aims from the mere vanities and frivolities of our earthly existence, but much that appears to us in the garb of a misfortune, often is a well-timed warning, a most precious boon added to our stores of information. The reproof of life enforces care and attention, instead of the heedlessness that often hurls us along at random, as the wind drives the leaf over land and sea; it teaches us patience and perseverance, those twin virtues which smooth the most rugged paths. It opens our eyes to the real nature of things when vanity blinds us; it stretches out a helping hand when flattery threatens to mislead us. It gives us courage, and also power over ourselves, when weakness causes us to vacillate between truth and falsehood. Without the voice of rebuke to arrest or to rouse us, we might either rush on to perdition or fritter our whole existence away. It is a guide, my dear children; follow it: it is a friend;

at all times listen to its counsels, and thus acquire experience, which it is pre-eminently able to give, since we will seldom accept it, or profit by it, when it comes to us in any other shape ; hearken to its advice, and it will teach you wisdom, showing you with perfect clearness the whole extent of your obligations.

The reproof of life may often pain us, and cause our tears to flow ; but let the weeping be like the dews of heaven, and fall on desolate hearts to revive and strengthen them, and make them blossom with fresh hopes—with the anxious hope of abiding among the good in this world, by the humble but faithful performance of duty—with the ardent hope of receiving the reward promised to the righteous by Almighty God, and of abiding hereafter near the light of His glory in the blissful realms of immortality.









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